THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO

Also by Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn

The Nobel Lecture on Literature
August 1914
A Lenten Letter to Pimen, Patriarch of All Russia
Stories and Prose Poems
The Love Girl and the Innocent
The Cancer Ward
The First Circle
For the Good of the Cause
We Never Make Mistakes
One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich

Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn

THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO

1918–1956

An Experiment in Literary Investigation

I-II

Translated from the Russian by Thomas P. Whitney

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I dedicate this
to all those who did not live
to tell it.
And may they please forgive me
for not having seen it all
nor remembered it all,
for not having divined all of it.

Author's Note

For years I have with reluctant heart withheld from publication this already completed book: my obligation to those still living outweighed my obligation to the dead. But now that State Security has seized the book anyway, I have no alternative but to publish it immediately.

In this book there are no fictitious persons, nor fictitious events. People and places are named with their own names. If they are identified by initials instead of names, it is for personal considerations. If they are not named at all, it is only because human memory has failed to preserve their names. But it all took place just as it is here described.

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Preface

In 1949 some friends and I came upon a noteworthy news item in *Nature*, a magazine of the Academy of Sciences. It reported in tiny type that in the course of excavations on the Kolyma River a subterranean ice lens had been discovered which was actually a frozen stream—and in it were found frozen specimens of prehistoric fauna some tens of thousands of years old. Whether fish or salamander, these were preserved in so fresh a state, the scientific correspondent reported, that those present immediately broke open the ice encasing the specimens and devoured them *with relish* on the spot.

The magazine no doubt astonished its small audience with the news of how successfully the flesh of fish could be kept fresh in a frozen state. But few, indeed, among its readers were able to decipher the genuine and heroic meaning of this incautious report.

As for us, however—we understood instantly. We could picture the entire scene right down to the smallest details: how those present broke up the ice in frenzied haste; how, flouting the higher claims of ichthyology and elbowing each other to be first, they tore off chunks of the prehistoric flesh and hauled them over to the bonfire to thaw them out and bolt them down.

We understood because we ourselves were the same kind of people as *those present* at that event. We, too, were from that powerful tribe of *zeks*, unique on the face of the earth, the only people who could devour prehistoric salamander *with relish*.

And the Kolyma was the greatest and most famous island, the

pole of ferocity of that amazing country of *Gulag* which, though scattered in an Archipelago geographically, was, in the psychological sense, fused into a continent—an almost invisible, almost imperceptible country inhabited by the zek people.

And this Archipelago crisscrossed and patterned that other country within which it was located, like a gigantic patchwork, cutting into its cities, hovering over its streets. Yet there were many who did not even guess at its presence and many, many others who had heard something vague. And only those who had been there knew the whole truth.

But, as though stricken dumb on the islands of the Archipelago, they kept their silence.

By an unexpected turn of our history, a bit of the truth, an insignificant part of the whole, was allowed out in the open. But those same hands which once screwed tight our handcuffs now hold out their palms in reconciliation: "No, don't! Don't dig up the past! Dwell on the past and you'll lose an eye."

But the proverb goes on to say: "Forget the past and you'll lose both eyes."

Decades go by, and the scars and sores of the past are healing over for good. In the course of this period some of the islands of the Archipelago have shuddered and dissolved and the polar sea of oblivion rolls over them. And someday in the future, this Archipelago, its air, and the bones of its inhabitants, frozen in a lens of ice, will be discovered by our descendants like some improbable salamander.

I would not be so bold as to try to write the history of the Archipelago. I have never had the chance to read the documents. And, in fact, will anyone ever have the chance to read them? Those who do not wish to *recall* have already had enough time—and will have more—to destroy all the documents, down to the very last one.

I have absorbed into myself my own eleven years there not as something shameful nor as a nightmare to be cursed: I have come almost to love that monstrous world, and now, by a happy turn of events, I have also been entrusted with many recent reports and letters. So perhaps I shall be able to give some account of the bones and flesh of that salamander—which, incidentally, is still alive.

This book could never have been created by one person alone. In addition to what I myself was able to take away from the Archipelago—on the skin of my back, and with my eyes and ears —material for this book was given me in reports, memoirs, and letters by 227 witnesses, whose names were to have been listed here.

What I here express to them is not personal gratitude, because this is our common, collective monument to all those who were tortured and murdered.

From among them I would like to single out in particular those who worked hard to help me obtain supporting bibliographical material from books to be found in contemporary libraries or from books long since removed from libraries and destroyed; great persistence was often required to find even one copy which had been preserved. Even more would I like to pay tribute to those who helped me keep this manuscript concealed in difficult periods and then to have it copied.

But the time has not yet come when I dare name them.

The old Solovetsky Islands prisoner Dmitri Petrovich Vitkovsky was to have been editor of this book. But his half a lifetime spent *there*—indeed, his own camp memoirs are entitled "Half a Lifetime"—resulted in untimely paralysis, and it was not until after he had already been deprived of the gift of speech that he was able to read several completed chapters only and see for himself that everything *will be told.*

And if freedom still does not dawn on my country for a long time to come, then the very reading and handing on of this book will be very dangerous, so that I am bound to salute future readers as well—on behalf of *those* who have perished.

When I began to write this book in 1958, I knew of no memoirs nor works of literature dealing with the camps. During my years of work before 1967 I gradually became acquainted with the *Kolyma Stories* of Varlam Shalamov and the memoirs of Dmitri Vitkovsky, Y. Ginzburg, and O. Adamova-Sliozberg, to which I refer in the course of my narrative as literary facts known to all (as indeed they someday shall be).

Despite their intent and against their will, certain persons provided invaluable material for this book and helped preserve many important facts and statistics as well as the very air they breathed: M. I. Sudrabs-Latsis, N. V. Krylenko, the Chief State Prosecutor for many years, his heir A. Y. Vyshinsky, and those jurists who were his accomplices, among whom one must single out in particular I. L. Averbakh.

Material for this book was also provided by *thirty-six* Soviet writers, headed by *Maxim Gorky*, authors of the disgraceful book on the White Sea Canal, which was the first in Russian literature to glorify slave labor.

PART I

The Prison Industry

■

"In the period of dictatorship, surrounded on all sides by enemies, we sometimes manifested unnecessary leniency and unnecessary softheartedness."

KRYLENKO,
speech at the Promparty trial

Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn—in the army

. . . in detention

. . . after his release from camp

Chapter 1

■

Arrest

How do people get to this clandestine Archipelago? Hour by hour planes fly there, ships steer their course there, and trains thunder off to it—but all with nary a mark on them to tell of their destination. And at ticket windows or at travel bureaus for Soviet or foreign tourists the employees would be astounded if you were to ask for a ticket to go there. They know nothing and they've never heard of the Archipelago as a whole or of any one of its innumerable islands.

Those who go to the Archipelago to administer it get there via the training schools of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Those who go there to be guards are conscripted via the military conscription centers.

And those who, like you and me, dear reader, go there to die, must get there solely and compulsorily via arrest.

Arrest! Need it be said that it is a breaking point in your life, a bolt of lightning which has scored a direct hit on you? That it is an unassimilable spiritual earthquake not every person can cope with, as a result of which people often slip into insanity?

The Universe has as many different centers as there are living beings in it. Each of us is a center of the Universe, and that Universe is shattered when they hiss at you: *"You are under arrest."*

If *you* are arrested, can anything else remain unshattered by this cataclysm?

But the darkened mind is incapable of embracing these displacements in our universe, and both the most sophisticated and

the veriest simpleton among us, drawing on all life's experience, can gasp out only: "Me? What for?"

And this is a question which, though repeated millions and millions of times before, has yet to receive an answer.

Arrest is an instantaneous, shattering thrust, expulsion, somersault from one state into another.

We have been happily borne—or perhaps have unhappily dragged our weary way—down the long and crooked streets of our lives, past all kinds of walls and fences made of rotting wood, rammed earth, brick, concrete, iron railings. We have never given a thought to what lies behind them. We have never tried to penetrate them with our vision or our understanding. But there is where the *Gulag* country begins, right next to us, two yards away from us. In addition, we have failed to notice an enormous number of closely fitted, well-disguised doors and gates in these fences. All those gates were prepared for us, every last one! And all of a sudden the fateful gate swings quickly open, and four white male hands, unaccustomed to physical labor but nonetheless strong and tenacious, grab us by the leg, arm, collar, cap, ear, and drag us in like a sack, and the gate behind us, the gate to our past life, is slammed shut once and for all.

That's all there is to it! You are arrested!

And you'll find nothing better to respond with than a lamblike bleat: "Me? What for?"

That's what arrest is: it's a blinding flash and a blow which shifts the present instantly into the past and the impossible into omnipotent actuality.

That's all. And neither for the first hour nor for the first day will you be able to grasp anything else.

Except that in your desperation the fake circus moon will blink at you: "It's a mistake! They'll set things right!"

And everything which is by now comprised in the traditional, even literary, image of an arrest will pile up and take shape, not in your own disordered memory, but in what your family and your neighbors in your apartment remember: The sharp nighttime ring or the rude knock at the door. The insolent entrance of the unwiped jackboots of the unsleeping State Security operatives. The frightened and cowed civilian witness at their backs. (And what function does this civilian witness serve? The victim doesn't even dare think about it and the operatives don't remem-

ber, but that's what the regulations call for, and so he has to sit there all night long and sign in the morning.[1] For the witness, jerked from his bed, it is torture too—to go out night after night to help arrest his own neighbors and acquaintances.)

The traditional image of arrest is also trembling hands packing for the victim—a change of underwear, a piece of soap, something to eat; and no one knows what is needed, what is permitted, what clothes are best to wear; and the Security agents keep interrupting and hurrying you:

"You don't need anything. They'll feed you there. It's warm there." (It's all lies. They keep hurrying you to frighten you.)

The traditional image of arrest is also what happens afterward, when the poor victim has been taken away. It is an alien, brutal, and crushing force totally dominating the apartment for hours on end, a breaking, ripping open, pulling from the walls, emptying things from wardrobes and desks onto the floor, shaking, dumping out, and ripping apart—piling up mountains of litter on the floor —and the crunch of things being trampled beneath jackboots. And nothing is sacred in a search! During the arrest of the locomotive engineer Inoshin, a tiny coffin stood in his room containing the body of his newly dead child. The *"jurists"* dumped the child's body out of the coffin and searched it. They shake sick people out of their sickbeds, and they unwind bandages to search beneath them.[2]

Nothing is so stupid as to be inadmissible during a search! For example, they seized from the antiquarian Chetverukhin "a certain number of pages of Tsarist decrees"—to wit, the decree on ending the war with Napoleon, on the formation of the Holy Alliance, and a proclamation of public prayers against cholera during the epidemic of 1830. From our greatest expert on Tibet, Vostrikov, they confiscated ancient Tibetan manuscripts of great value; and it took the pupils of the deceased scholar thirty years to wrest them from the KGB! When the Orientalist Nevsky was

1. The regulation, purposeless in itself, derives, N.M. recalls, from that strange time when the citizenry not only was supposed to but actually dared to verify the actions of the police.

2. When in 1937 they wiped out Dr. Kazakov's institute, the "commission" broke up the jars containing the *lysates* developed by him, even though patients who had been cured and others still being treated rushed around them, begging them to preserve the miraculous medicines. (According to the official version, the lysates were supposed to be poisons; in that case, why should they not have been kept as material evidence?)

arrested, they grabbed Tangut manuscripts—and twenty-five years later the deceased victim was posthumously awarded a Lenin Prize for deciphering them. From Karger they took his archive of the Yenisei Ostyaks and vetoed the alphabet and vocabulary he had developed for this people—and a small nationality was thereby left without any written language. It would take a long time to describe all this in educated speech, but there's a folk saying about the search which covers the subject: *They are looking for something which was never put there.* They carry off whatever they have seized, but sometimes they compel the arrested individual to carry it. Thus Nina Aleksandrovna Palchinskaya hauled over her shoulder a bag filled with the papers and letters of her eternally busy and active husband, the late great Russian engineer, carrying it into *their* maw—once and for all, forever.

For those left behind after the arrest there is the long tail end of a wrecked and devastated life. And the attempts to go and deliver food parcels. But from all the windows the answer comes in barking voices: "Nobody here by that name!" "Never heard of him!" Yes, and in the worst days in Leningrad it took five days of standing in crowded lines just to get to that window. And it may be only after half a year or a year that the arrested person responds at all. Or else the answer is tossed out: "Deprived of the right to correspond." And that means once and for all. "No right to correspondence"—and that almost for certain means: "Has been shot."[3]

That's how we picture arrest to ourselves.

The kind of night arrest described is, in fact, a favorite, because it has important advantages. Everyone living in the apartment is thrown into a state of terror by the first knock at the door. The arrested person is torn from the warmth of his bed. He is in a daze, half-asleep, helpless, and his judgment is befogged. In a night arrest the State Security men have a superiority in numbers; there are many of them, armed, against one person who hasn't

3. In other words, "We live in the cursed conditions in which a human being can disappear into the void and even his closest relatives, his mother and his wife . . . do not know for years what has become of him." Is that right or not? That is what Lenin wrote in 1910 in his obituary of Babushkin. But let's speak frankly: Babushkin was transporting arms for an uprising, and was caught with them when he was shot. He knew what he was doing. You couldn't say that about helpless rabbits like us.

even finished buttoning his trousers. During the arrest and search it is highly improbable that a crowd of potential supporters will gather at the entrance. The unhurried, step-by-step visits, first to one apartment, then to another, tomorrow to a third and a fourth, provide an opportunity for the Security operations personnel to be deployed with the maximum efficiency and to imprison many more citizens of a given town than the police force itself numbers.

In addition, there's an advantage to night arrests in that neither the people in neighboring apartment houses nor those on the city streets can see how many have been taken away. Arrests which frighten the closest neighbors are no event at all to those farther away. It's as if they had not taken place. Along that same asphalt ribbon on which the Black Marias scurry at night, a tribe of youngsters strides by day with banners, flowers, and gay, untroubled songs.

But those who *take*, whose work consists solely of arrests, for whom the horror is boringly repetitive, have a much broader understanding of how arrests operate. They operate according to a large body of theory, and innocence must not lead one to ignore this. The science of arrest is an important segment of the course on general penology and has been propped up with a substantial body of social theory. Arrests are classified according to various criteria: nighttime and daytime; at home, at work, during a journey; first-time arrests and repeats; individual and group arrests. Arrests are distinguished by the degree of surprise required, the amount of resistance expected (even though in tens of millions of cases no resistance was expected and in fact there was none). Arrests are also differentiated by the thoroughness of the required search;[4] by instructions either to make out or not to

4. And there is a separate Science of Searches too. I have had the chance to read a pamphlet on this subject for correspondence-school law students in Alma-Ata. Its author praises highly those police officials who in the course of their searches went so far as to turn over two tons of manure, eight cubic yards of firewood, or two loads of hay; cleaned the snow from an entire collective-farm vegetable plot, dismantled brick ovens, dug up cesspools, checked out toilet bowls, looked into doghouses, chicken coops, birdhouses, tore apart mattresses, ripped adhesive tape off people's bodies and even tore out metal teeth in the search for microfilm. Students were advised to begin and to end with a body search (during the course of the search the arrested person might have grabbed up something that had already been examined). They were also advised to return to the site of a search at a different time of day and carry out the search all over again.

make out an inventory of confiscated property or seal a room or apartment; to arrest the wife after the husband and send the children to an orphanage, or to send the rest of the family into exile, or to send the old folks to a labor camp too.

No, no: arrests vary widely in form. In 1926 Irma Mendel, a Hungarian, obtained through the Comintern two front-row tickets to the Bolshoi Theatre. Interrogator Klegel was courting her at the time and she invited him to go with her. They sat through the show very affectionately, and when it was over he took her—straight to the Lubyanka. And if on a flowering June day in 1927 on Kuznetsky Most, the plump-cheeked, redheaded beauty Anna Skripnikova, who had just bought some navy-blue material for a dress, climbed into a hansom cab with a young man-about-town, you can be sure it wasn't a lovers' tryst at all, as the cabman understood very well and showed by his frown (he knew the *Organs* don't pay). It was an arrest. In just a moment they would turn on the Lubyanka and enter the black maw of the gates. And if, some twenty-two springs later, Navy Captain Second Rank Boris Burkovsky, wearing a white tunic and a trace of expensive eau de cologne, was buying a cake for a young lady, do not take an oath that the cake would ever reach the young lady and not be sliced up instead by the knives of the men searching the captain and then delivered to him in his first cell. No, one certainly cannot say that daylight arrest, arrest during a journey, or arrest in the middle of a crowd has ever been neglected in our country. However, it has always been clean-cut—and, most surprising of all, the victims, in cooperation with the Security men, have conducted themselves in the noblest conceivable manner, so as to spare the living from witnessing the death of the condemned.

Not everyone can be arrested at home, with a preliminary knock at the door (and if there is a knock, then it has to be the house manager or else the postman). And not everyone can be arrested at work either. If the person to be arrested is vicious, then it's better to seize him *outside* his ordinary milieu—away from his family and colleagues, from those who share his views, from any hiding places. It is essential that he have no chance to destroy, hide, or pass on anything to anyone. VIP's in the military or the Party were sometimes first given new assignments, ensconced in a private railway car, and then arrested en route. Some

obscure, ordinary mortal, scared to death by epidemic arrests all around him and already depressed for a week by sinister glances from his chief, is suddenly summoned to the local Party committee, where he is beamingly presented with a vacation ticket to a Sochi sanatorium. The rabbit is overwhelmed and immediately concludes that his fears were groundless. After expressing his gratitude, he hurries home, triumphant, to pack his suitcase. It is only two hours till train time, and he scolds his wife for being too slow. He arrives at the station with time to spare. And there in the waiting room or at the bar he is hailed by an extraordinarily pleasant young man: "Don't you remember me, Pyotr Ivanich?" Pyotr Ivanich has difficulty remembering: "Well, not exactly, you see, although . . ." The young man, however, is overflowing with friendly concern: "Come now, how can that be? I'll have to remind you. . . ." And he bows respectfully to Pyotr Ivanich's wife: "You must forgive us. I'll keep him only *one minute.*" The wife accedes, and trustingly the husband lets himself be led away by the arm—forever or for ten years!

The station is thronged—and no one notices anything. . . . Oh, you citizens who love to travel! Do not forget that in every station there are a GPU Branch and several prison cells.

This importunity of alleged acquaintances is so abrupt that only a person who has not had the wolfish preparation of camp life is likely to pull back from it. Do not suppose, for example, that if you are an employee of the American Embassy by the name of Alexander D. you cannot be arrested in broad daylight on Gorky Street, right by the Central Telegraph Office. Your unfamiliar friend dashes through the press of the crowd, and opens his plundering arms to embrace you: "Saaasha!" He simply shouts at you, with no effort to be inconspicuous. "Hey, pal! Long time no see! Come on over, let's get out of the way." At that moment a Pobeda sedan draws up to the curb. . . . And several days later TASS will issue an angry statement to all the papers alleging that informed circles of the Soviet government have no information on the disappearance of Alexander D. But what's so unusual about that? Our boys have carried out such arrests in Brussels—which was where Zhora Blednov was seized—not just in Moscow.

One has to give the *Organs* their due: in an age when public

speeches, the plays in our theaters, and women's fashions all seem to have come off assembly lines, arrests can be of the most varied kind. They take you aside in a factory corridor after you have had your pass checked—and you're arrested. They take you from a military hospital with a temperature of 102, as they did with Ans Bernshtein, and the doctor will not raise a peep about your arrest—just let him try! They'll take you right off the operating table—as they took N. M. Vorobyev, a school inspector, in 1936, in the middle of an operation for stomach ulcer—and drag you off to a cell, as they did him, half-alive and all bloody (as Karpunich recollects). Or, like Nadya Levitskaya, you try to get information about your mother's sentence, and they give it to you, but it turns out to be a confrontation—and your own arrest! In the Gastronome—the fancy food store—you are invited to the special-order department and arrested there. You are arrested by a religious pilgrim whom you have put up for the night "for the sake of Christ." You are arrested by a meterman who has come to read your electric meter. You are arrested by a bicyclist who has run into you on the street, by a railway conductor, a taxi driver, a savings bank teller, the manager of a movie theater. Any one of them can arrest you, and you notice the concealed maroon-colored identification card only when it is too late.

Sometimes arrests even seem to be a game—there is so much superfluous imagination, so much well-fed energy, invested in them. After all, the victim would not resist anyway. Is it that the Security agents want to justify their employment and their numbers? After all, it would seem enough to send notices to all the rabbits marked for arrest, and they would show up obediently at the designated hour and minute at the iron gates of State Security with a bundle in their hands—ready to occupy a piece of floor in the cell for which they were intended. And, in fact, that's the way collective farmers are arrested. Who wants to go all the way to a hut at night, with no roads to travel on? They are summoned to the village soviet—and arrested there. Manual workers are called into the office.

Of course, every machine has a point at which it is overloaded, beyond which it cannot function. In the strained and overloaded years of 1945 and 1946, when trainload after trainload poured in from Europe, to be swallowed up immediately and sent off to

Gulag, all that excessive theatricality went out the window, and the whole theory suffered greatly. All the fuss and feathers of ritual went flying in every direction, and the arrest of tens of thousands took on the appearance of a squalid roll call: they stood there with lists, read off the names of those on one train, loaded them onto another, and that was the whole arrest.

For several decades political arrests were distinguished in our country precisely by the fact that people were arrested who were guilty of nothing and were therefore unprepared to put up any resistance whatsoever. There was a general feeling of being destined for destruction, a sense of having nowhere to escape from the GPU-NKVD (which, incidentally, given our internal passport system, was quite accurate). And even in the fever of epidemic arrests, when people leaving for work said farewell to their families every day, because they could not be certain they would return at night, even then almost no one tried to run away and only in rare cases did people commit suicide. And that was exactly what was required. A submissive sheep is a find for a wolf.

This submissiveness was also due to ignorance of the mechanics of epidemic arrests. By and large, the *Organs* had no profound reasons for their choice of whom to arrest and whom not to arrest. They merely had over-all assignments, quotas for a specific number of arrests. These quotas might be filled on an orderly basis or wholly arbitrarily. In 1937 a woman came to the reception room of the Novocherkassk NKVD to ask what she should do about the unfed unweaned infant of a neighbor who had been arrested. They said: "Sit down, we'll find out." She sat there for two hours—whereupon they took her and tossed her into a cell. They had a total plan which had to be fulfilled in a hurry, and there was no one available to send out into the city —and here was this woman already in their hands!

On the other hand, the NKVD did come to get the Latvian Andrei Pavel near Orsha. But he didn't open the door; he jumped out the window, escaped, and shot straight to Siberia. And even though he lived under his own name, and it was clear from his documents that he had come from Orsha, he was *never* arrested, nor summoned to the Organs, nor subjected to any suspicion whatsoever. After all, search for wanted persons falls into three categories: All-Union, republican, and provincial. And the pur-

suit of nearly half of those arrested in those epidemics would have been confined to the provinces. A person marked for arrest by virtue of chance circumstances, such as a neighbor's denunciation, could be easily replaced by another neighbor. Others, like Andrei Pavel, who found themselves in a trap or an ambushed apartment by accident, and who were bold enough to escape immediately, before they could be questioned, were never caught and never charged; while those who stayed behind to await justice got a term in prison. And the overwhelming majority—almost all—behaved just like that: without any spirit, helplessly, with a sense of doom.

It is true, of course, that the NKVD, in the absence of the person it wanted, would make his relatives guarantee not to leave the area. And, of course, it was easy enough *to cook up* a case against those who stayed behind to replace the one who had fled.

Universal innocence also gave rise to the universal failure to act. Maybe they *won't take* you? Maybe it will all blow over? A. I. Ladyzhensky was the chief teacher in a school in remote Kologriv. In 1937 a peasant approached him in an open market and passed him a message from a third person: "Aleksandr Ivanich, get out of town, *you are on the list!*" But he stayed: After all, the whole school rests on my shoulders, and *their own* children are pupils here. How can they arrest me? (Several days later he was arrested.) Not everyone was so fortunate as to understand at the age of fourteen, as did Vanya Levitsky: "Every honest man is sure to go to prison. Right now my papa is serving time, and when I grow up they'll put me in too." (They put him in when he was twenty-three years old.) The majority sit quietly and dare to hope. Since you aren't guilty, then how can they arrest you? *It's a mistake!* They are already dragging you along by the collar, and you still keep on exclaiming to yourself: "It's a mistake! *They'll set things straight and let me out!*" Others are being arrested en masse, and that's a bothersome fact, but in those other cases there is always some dark area: "Maybe *he* was guilty . . . ?" But as for you, you are obviously innocent! You still believe that the *Organs* are humanly logical institutions: they will set things straight and let you out.

Why, then, should you run away? And how can you resist right then? After all, you'll only make your situation worse; you'll

make it more difficult for them to sort out the mistake. And it isn't just that you don't put up any resistance; you even walk down the stairs on tiptoe, as you are ordered to do, so your neighbors won't hear.[5]

At what exact point, then, should one resist? When one's belt is taken away? When one is ordered to face into a corner? When one crosses the threshold of one's home? An arrest consists of a series of incidental irrelevancies, of a multitude of things that do not matter, and there seems no point in arguing about any one of them individually—especially at a time when the thoughts of the person arrested are wrapped tightly about the big question: "What for?"—and yet all these incidental irrelevancies taken together implacably constitute the arrest.

Almost anything can occupy the thoughts of a person who has just been arrested! This alone would fill volumes. There can be feelings which we never suspected. When nineteen-year-old

5. And how we burned in the camps later, thinking: What would things have been like if every Security operative, when he went out at night to make an arrest, had been uncertain whether he would return alive and had to say good-bye to his family? Or if, during periods of mass arrests, as for example in Leningrad, when they arrested a quarter of the entire city, people had not simply sat there in their lairs, paling with terror at every bang of the downstairs door and at every step on the staircase, but had understood they had nothing left to lose and had boldly set up in the downstairs hall an ambush of half a dozen people with axes, hammers, pokers, or whatever else was at hand? After all, you knew ahead of time that those bluecaps were out at night for no good purpose. And you could be sure ahead of time that you'd be cracking the skull of a cutthroat. Or what about the Black Maria sitting out there on the street with one lonely chauffeur—what if it had been driven off or its tires spiked? The Organs would very quickly have suffered a shortage of officers and transport and, notwithstanding all of Stalin's thirst, the cursed machine would have ground to a halt!

If . . . if . . . We didn't love freedom enough. And even more—we had no awareness of the real situation. We spent ourselves in one unrestrained outburst in 1917, and then we *hurried* to submit. We submitted *with pleasure!* (Arthur Ransome describes a workers' meeting in Yaroslavl in 1921. Delegates were sent to the workers from the Central Committee in Moscow to confer on the substance of the argument about trade unions. The representative of the opposition, Y. Larin, explained to the workers that their trade union must be their defense against the administration, that they possessed rights which they had won and upon which no one else had any right to infringe. The workers, however, were completely indifferent, simply *not comprehending* whom they still needed to be defended against and why they still needed any rights. When the spokesman for the Party line rebuked them for their laziness and for getting out of hand, and demanded sacrifices from them—overtime work without pay, reductions in food, military discipline in the factory administration—this aroused great elation and applause.) We purely and simply *deserved* everything that happened afterward.

Yevgeniya Doyarenko was arrested in 1921 and three young Chekists were poking about her bed and through the underwear in her chest of drawers, she was not disturbed. There was nothing there, and they would find nothing. But all of a sudden they touched her personal diary, which she would not have shown even to her own mother. And these hostile young strangers reading the words she had written was more devastating to her than the whole Lubyanka with its bars and its cellars. It is true of many that the outrage inflicted by arrest on their personal feelings and attachments can be far, far stronger than their political beliefs or their fear of prison. A person who is not inwardly prepared for the use of violence against him is always weaker than the person committing the violence.

There are a few bright and daring individuals who understand instantly. Grigoryev, the Director of the Geological Institute of the Academy of Sciences, barricaded himself inside and spent two hours burning up his papers when they came to arrest him in 1948.

Sometimes the principal emotion of the person arrested is relief and even *happiness!* This is another aspect of human nature. It happened before the Revolution too: the Yekaterinodar schoolteacher Serdyukova, involved in the case of Aleksandr Ulyanov, felt only relief when she was arrested. But this feeling was a thousand times stronger during epidemics of arrests when all around you they were hauling in people like yourself and still had not come for you; for some reason they were taking their time. After all, that kind of exhaustion, that kind of suffering, is worse than any kind of arrest, and not only for a person of limited courage. Vasily Vlasov, a fearless Communist, whom we shall recall more than once later on, renounced the idea of escape proposed by his non-Party assistants, and pined away because the entire leadership of the Kady District was arrested in 1937, and they kept delaying and delaying his own arrest. He could only endure the blow head on. He did endure it, and then he relaxed, and during the first days after his arrest he felt marvelous. In 1934 the priest Father Irakly went to Alma-Ata to visit some believers in exile there. During his absence they came three times to his Moscow apartment to arrest him. When he returned, members of his flock met him at the station and refused to let him go home,

and for eight years hid him in one apartment after another. The priest suffered so painfully from this harried life that when he was finally arrested in 1942 he sang hymns of praise to God.

In this chapter we are speaking only of the masses, the helpless rabbits arrested for no one knows what reason. But in this book we will also have to touch on those who in postrevolutionary times remained genuinely *political.* Vera Rybakova, a Social Democratic student, *dreamed* when she was in freedom of being in the detention center in Suzdal. Only there did she hope to encounter her old comrades—for there were none of them left in freedom. And only there could she work out her world outlook. The Socialist Revolutionary—the SR—Yekaterina Olitskaya didn't consider herself *worthy* of being imprisoned in 1924. After all, Russia's best people had served time and she was still young and had not yet done anything for Russia. But *freedom* itself was expelling her. And so both of them went to prison—with pride and happiness.

"Resistance! Why didn't you resist?" Today those who have continued to live on in comfort scold those who suffered.

Yes, resistance should have begun right there, at the moment of the arrest itself.

But it did not begin.

And so they are *leading* you. During a daylight arrest there is always that brief and unique moment when they are *leading* you, either inconspicuously, on the basis of a cowardly deal you have made, or else quite openly, their pistols unholstered, through a crowd of hundreds of just such doomed innocents as yourself. You aren't gagged. You really can and you really ought to *cry out*—to *cry out* that you are being arrested! That villains in disguise are trapping people! That arrests are being made on the strength of false denunciations! That millions are being subjected to silent reprisals! If many such outcries had been heard all over the city in the course of a day, would not our fellow citizens perhaps have begun to bristle? And would arrests perhaps no longer have been so easy?

In 1927, when submissiveness had not yet softened our brains to such a degree, two Chekists tried to arrest a woman on Serpukhov Square during the day. She grabbed hold of the stanchion of

a streetlamp and began to scream, refusing to submit. A crowd gathered. (There had to have been that kind of woman; there had to have been that kind of crowd too! Passers-by didn't all just close their eyes and hurry by!) The quick young men immediately became flustered. They can't *work* in the public eye. They got into their car and fled. (Right then and there she should have gone to a railroad station and left! But she went home to spend the night. And during the night they took her off to the Lubyanka.)

Instead, not one sound comes from *your* parched lips, and that passing crowd naïvely believes that you and your executioners are friends out for a stroll.

I myself often had the chance to *cry out.*

On the eleventh day after my arrest, three SMERSH bums, more burdened by four suitcases full of war booty than by me (they had come to rely on me in the course of the long trip), brought me to the Byelorussian Station in Moscow. They were called a *Special Convoy*—in other words, a special escort guard —but in actual fact their automatic pistols only interfered with their dragging along the four terribly heavy bags of loot they and their chiefs in SMERSH counterintelligence on the Second Byelorussian Front had plundered in Germany and were now bringing to their families in the Fatherland under the pretext of convoying me. I myself lugged a fifth suitcase with no great joy since it contained my diaries and literary works, which were being used as evidence against me.

Not one of the three knew the city, and it was up to me to pick the shortest route to the prison. I had personally to conduct them to the Lubyanka, where they had never been before (and which, in fact, I confused with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

I had spent one day in the counterintelligence prison at army headquarters and three days in the counterintelligence prison at the headquarters of the front, where my cellmates had educated me in the deceptions practiced by the interrogators, their threats and beatings; in the fact that once a person was arrested he was never released; and in the inevitability of a *tenner*, a ten-year sentence; and then by a miracle I had suddenly burst out of there and for four days had traveled like a *free* person among *free* people, even though my flanks had already lain on rotten straw

beside the latrine bucket, my eyes had already beheld beaten-up and sleepless men, my ears had heard the truth, and my mouth had tasted prison gruel. So why did I keep silent? Why, in my last minute out in the open, did I not attempt to enlighten the hoodwinked crowd?

I kept silent, too, in the Polish city of Brodnica—but maybe they didn't understand Russian there. I didn't call out one word on the streets of Bialystok—but maybe it wasn't a matter that concerned the Poles. I didn't utter a sound at the Volkovysk Station—but there were very few people there. I walked along the Minsk Station platform beside those same bandits as if nothing at all were amiss—but the station was still a ruin. And now I was leading the SMERSH men through the circular upper concourse of the Byelorussian-Radial subway station on the Moscow circle line, with its white-ceilinged dome and brilliant electric lights, and opposite us two parallel escalators, thickly packed with Muscovites, rising from below. It seemed as though they were all looking at me! They kept coming in an endless ribbon from down there, from the depths of ignorance—on and on beneath the gleaming dome, reaching toward me for at least one word of truth—so why did I keep silent?

Every man always has handy a dozen glib little reasons why he is right not to sacrifice himself.

Some still have hopes of a favorable outcome to their case and are afraid to ruin their chances by an outcry. (For, after all, we get no news from that other world, and we do not realize that from the very moment of arrest our fate has almost certainly been decided in the worst possible sense and that we cannot make it any worse.) Others have not yet attained the mature concepts on which a shout of protest to the crowd must be based. Indeed, only a revolutionary has slogans on his lips that are crying to be uttered aloud; and where would the uninvolved, peaceable average man come by such slogans? He simply *does not know what* to shout. And then, last of all, there is the person whose heart is too full of emotion, whose eyes have seen too much, for that whole ocean to pour forth in a few disconnected cries.

As for me, I kept silent for one further reason: because those Muscovites thronging the steps of the escalators were too few for

me, *too few!* Here my cry would be heard by 200 or twice 200, but what about the 200 million? Vaguely, unclearly, I had a vision that someday I would cry out to the 200 million.

But for the time being I did not open my mouth, and the escalator dragged me implacably down into the nether world.

And when I got to Okhotny Ryad, I continued to keep silent.

Nor did I utter a cry at the Metropole Hotel.

Nor wave my arms on the Golgotha of Lubyanka Square.

■

Mine was, probably, the easiest imaginable kind of arrest. It did not tear me from the embrace of kith and kin, nor wrench me from a deeply cherished home life. One pallid European February it took me from our narrow salient on the Baltic Sea, where, depending on one's point of view, either we had surrounded the Germans or they had surrounded us, and it deprived me only of my familiar artillery battery and the scenes of the last three months of the war.

The brigade commander called me to his headquarters and asked me for my pistol; I turned it over without suspecting any evil intent, when suddenly, from a tense, immobile suite of staff officers in the corner, two counterintelligence officers stepped forward hurriedly, crossed the room in a few quick bounds, their four hands grabbed simultaneously at the star on my cap, my shoulder boards, my officer's belt, my map case, and they shouted theatrically:

"You are under arrest!"

Burning and prickling from head to toe, all I could exclaim was:

"Me? What for?"

And even though there is usually no answer to this question, surprisingly I received one! This is worth recalling, because it is so contrary to our usual custom. Hardly had the SMERSH men finished "plucking" me and taken my notes on political subjects, along with my map case, and begun to push me as quickly as possible toward the exit, urged on by the German shellfire rattling the windowpanes, than I heard myself firmly addressed—yes! Across the sheer gap separating me from those left behind, the

gap created by the heavy-falling word "arrest," across that quarantine line not even a sound dared penetrate, came the unthinkable, magic words of the brigade commander:

"Solzhenitsyn. Come back here."

With a sharp turn I broke away from the hands of the SMERSH men and stepped back to the brigade commander. I had never known him very well. He had never condescended to run-of-the-mill conversations with me. To me his face had always conveyed an order, a command, wrath. But right now it was illuminated in a thoughtful way. Was it from shame for his own involuntary part in this dirty business? Was it from an impulse to rise above the pitiful subordination of a whole lifetime? Ten days before, I had led my own reconnaissance battery almost intact out of the *fire pocket* in which the twelve heavy guns of his artillery battalion had been left, and now he had to renounce me because of a piece of paper with a seal on it?

"You have . . ." he asked weightily, "a friend on the First Ukrainian Front?"

"It's forbidden! You have no right!" the captain and the major of counterintelligence shouted at the colonel. In the corner, the suite of staff officers crowded closer to each other in fright, as if they feared to share the brigade commander's unbelievable rashness (the political officers among them already preparing to present *materials* against him). But I had already understood: I knew instantly I had been arrested because of my correspondence with a school friend, and understood from what direction to expect danger.

Zakhar Georgiyevich Travkin could have stopped right there! But no! Continuing his attempt to expunge his part in this and to stand erect before his own conscience, he rose from behind his desk—he had never stood up in my presence in my former life—and reached across the quarantine line that separated us and gave me his hand, although he would never have reached out his hand to me had I remained a free man. And pressing my hand, while his whole suite stood there in mute horror, showing that warmth that may appear in an habitually severe face, he said fearlessly and precisely:

"I wish you happiness, Captain!"

Not only was I no longer a captain, but I had been exposed

as an enemy of the people (for among us every person is totally exposed from the moment of arrest). And he had wished happiness—to an enemy?[6]

The panes rattled. The German shells tore up the earth two hundred yards away, reminding one that *this* could not have happened back in the rear, under the ordinary circumstances of established existence, but only out here, under the breath of death, which was not only close by but in the face of which all were equal.

This is not going to be a volume of memoirs about my own life. Therefore I am not going to recount the truly amusing details of my arrest, which was like no other. That night the SMERSH officers gave up their last hope of being able to make out where we were on the map—they never had been able to read maps anyway. So they politely handed the map to me and asked me to tell the driver how to proceed to counterintelligence at army headquarters. I, therefore, led them and myself to that prison, and in gratitude they immediately put me not in an ordinary cell but in a punishment cell. And I really must describe that closet in a German peasant house which served as a temporary punishment cell.

It was the length of one human body and wide enough for three to lie packed tightly, four at a pinch. As it happened, I was the fourth, shoved in after midnight. The three lying there blinked sleepily at me in the light of the smoky kerosene lantern and moved over, giving me enough space to lie on my side, half between them, half on top of them, until gradually, by sheer weight, I could wedge my way in. And so four overcoats lay on the crushed-straw-covered floor, with eight boots pointing at the door. They slept and I burned. The more self-assured I had been as a captain half a day before, the more painful it was to crowd onto the floor of that closet. Once or twice the other fellows woke up numb on one side, and we all turned over at the same time.

6. Here is what is most surprising of all: one *can* be a human being despite everything! Nothing happened to Travkin. Not long ago, we met again cordially, and I really got to know him for the first time. He is a retired general and an inspector of the Hunters' Alliance.

Toward morning they awoke, yawned, grunted, pulled up their legs, moved into various corners, and our acquaintance began.

"What are you in for?"

But a troubled little breeze of caution had already breathed on me beneath the poisoned roof of SMERSH and I pretended to be surprised:

"No idea. Do the bastards tell you?"

However, my cellmates—tankmen in soft black helmets—hid nothing. They were three honest, openhearted soldiers—people of a kind I had become attached to during the war years because I myself was more complex and worse. All three had been officers. Their shoulder boards also had been viciously torn off, and in some places the cotton batting stuck out. On their stained field shirts light patches indicated where decorations had been removed, and there were dark and red scars on their faces and arms, the results of wounds and burns. Their tank unit had, unfortunately, arrived for repairs in the village where the SMERSH counterintelligence headquarters of the Forty-eighth Army was located. Still damp from the battle of the day before, yesterday they had gotten drunk, and on the outskirts of the village broke into a bath where they had noticed two raunchy broads going to bathe. The girls, half-dressed, managed to get away all right from the soldiers' staggering, drunken legs. But one of them, it turned out, was the property of the army Chief of Counterintelligence, no less.

Yes! For three weeks the war had been going on inside Germany, and all of us knew very well that if the girls were German they could be raped and then shot. This was almost a combat distinction. Had they been Polish girls or our own displaced Russian girls, they could have been chased naked around the garden and slapped on the behind—an amusement, no more. But just because this one was the "campaign wife" of the Chief of Counterintelligence, right off some deep-in-the-rear sergeant had viciously torn from three front-line officers the shoulder boards awarded them by the front headquarters and had taken off the decorations conferred upon them by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. And now these warriors, who had gone through the whole war and who had no doubt crushed more than one

line of enemy trenches, were waiting for a court-martial, whose members, had it not been for their tank, could have come nowhere near the village.

We put out the kerosene lamp, which had already used up all the air there was to breathe. A *Judas hole* the size of a postage stamp had been cut in the door and through it came indirect light from the corridor. Then, as if afraid that with the coming of daylight we would have too much room in the punishment cell, they *tossed in* a fifth person. He stepped in wearing a newish Red Army tunic and a cap that was also new, and when he stopped opposite the peephole we could see a fresh face with a turned-up nose and red cheeks.

"Where are you from, brother? Who are you?"

"From the *other* side," he answered briskly. "A shhpy."

"You're kidding!" We were astounded. (To be a spy and to admit it—Sheinin and the brothers Tur had never written that kind of spy story!)

"What is there to kid about in wartime?" the young fellow sighed reasonably. "And just how else can you get back home from being a POW? Well, you tell me!"

He had barely begun to tell us how, some days back, the Germans had led him through the front lines so that he could play the spy and blow up bridges, whereupon he had gone immediately to the nearest battalion headquarters to turn himself in; but the weary, sleep-starved battalion commander hadn't believed his story about being a spy and had sent him off to the nurse to get a pill. And at that moment new impressions burst upon us:

"Out for toilet call! Hands behind your backs!" hollered a master sergeant *hardhead* as the door sprang open; he was just built for swinging the tail of a 122-millimeter cannon.

A circle of machine gunners had been strung around the peasant courtyard, guarding the path which was pointed out to us and which went behind the barn. I was bursting with indignation that some ignoramus of a master sergeant dared to give orders to us officers: "Hands behind your backs!" But the tank officers put their hands behind them and I followed suit.

Back of the barn was a small square area in which the snow had been all trampled down but had not yet melted. It was soiled

all over with human feces, so densely scattered over the whole square that it was difficult to find a spot to place one's two feet and squat. However, we spread ourselves about and the five of us did squat down. Two machine gunners grimly pointed their machine pistols at us as we squatted, and before a minute had passed the master sergeant brusquely urged us on:

"Come on, hurry it up! With us they do it quickly!"

Not far from me squatted one of the tankmen, a native of Rostov, a tall, melancholy senior lieutenant. His face was blackened by a thin film of metallic dust or smoke, but the big red scar stretching across his cheek stood out nonetheless.

"What do you mean, *with us?*" he asked quietly, indicating no intention of hurrying back to the punishment cell that still stank of kerosene.

"In SMERSH counterintelligence!" the master sergeant shot back proudly and more resonantly than was called for. (The counterintelligence men used to love that tastelessly concocted word "SMERSH," manufactured from the initial syllables of the words for "death to spies." They felt it intimidated people.)

"And *with us* we do it slowly," replied the senior lieutenant thoughtfully. His helmet was pulled back, uncovering his still untrimmed hair. His oaken, battle-hardened rear end was lifted toward the pleasant coolish breeze.

"Where do you mean, *with us?*" the master sergeant barked at him more loudly than he needed to.

"In the Red Army," the senior lieutenant replied very quietly from his heels, measuring with his look the cannon-tailer that never was.

Such were my first gulps of prison air.

Chapter 2

■

The History of Our Sewage Disposal System

When people today decry *the abuses of the cult*, they keep getting hung up on those years which are stuck in our throats, '37 and '38. And memory begins to make it seem as though arrests were never made *before* or *after*, but only in those two years.

Although I have no statistics at hand, I am not afraid of erring when I say that the *wave* of 1937 and 1938 was neither the only one nor even the main one, but only one, perhaps, of the three biggest waves which strained the murky, stinking pipes of our prison sewers to bursting.

Before it came the wave of 1929 and 1930, the size of a good River Ob, which drove a mere fifteen million peasants, maybe even more, out into the taiga and the tundra. But peasants are a silent people, without a literary voice, nor do they write complaints or memoirs. No interrogators sweated out the night with them, nor did they bother to draw up formal indictments—it was enough to have a decree from the village soviet. This wave poured forth, sank down into the permafrost, and even our most active minds recall hardly a thing about it. It is as if it had not even scarred the Russian conscience. And yet Stalin (and you and I as well) committed no crime more heinous than this.

And *after* it there was the wave of 1944 to 1946, the size of a good Yenisei, when they dumped whole *nations* down the sewer pipes, not to mention millions and millions of others who

(because of us!) had been prisoners of war, or carried off to Germany and subsequently repatriated. (This was Stalin's method of cauterizing the wounds so that scar tissue would form more quickly, and thus the body politic as a whole would not have to rest up, catch its breath, regain its strength.) But in this wave, too, the people were of the simpler kind, and they wrote no memoirs.

But the wave of 1937 swept up and carried off to the Archipelago people of position, people with a Party past, yes, educated people, around whom were many who had been wounded and remained in the cities . . . and what a lot of them had pen in hand! And today they are all writing, speaking, remembering: "Nineteen thirty-seven!" A whole Volga of the people's grief!

But just say "Nineteen thirty-seven" to a Crimean Tatar, a Kalmyk, a Chechen, and he'll shrug his shoulders. And what's 1937 to Leningrad when 1935 had come before it? And for the *second-termers* (i.e., *repeaters*), or people from the Baltic countries—weren't 1948 and 1949 harder on them? And if sticklers for style and geography should accuse me of having omitted some Russian rivers, and of not yet having named some of the waves, then just give me enough paper! There were enough waves to use up the names of all the rivers of Russia!

It is well known that any *organ* withers away if it is not used. Therefore, if we know that the Soviet Security organs, or *Organs* (and they christened themselves with this vile word), praised and exalted above all living things, have not died off even to the extent of one single tentacle, but, instead, have grown new ones and strengthened their muscles—it is easy to deduce that they have had *constant* exercise.

Through the sewer pipes the flow pulsed. Sometimes the pressure was higher than had been projected, sometimes lower. But the prison sewers were never empty. The blood, the sweat, and the urine into which we were pulped pulsed through them continuously. The history of this sewage system is the history of an endless swallow and flow; flood alternating with ebb and ebb again with flood; waves pouring in, some big, some small; brooks and rivulets flowing in from all sides; trickles oozing in through gutters; and then just plain individually scooped-up droplets.

The chronological list which follows, in which waves made up

of millions of arrested persons are given equal attention with ordinary streamlets of unremarkable handfuls, is quite incomplete, meager, miserly, and limited by my own capacity to penetrate the past. What is really needed is a great deal of additional work by survivors familiar with the material.

■

In compiling this list the most difficult thing is to *begin,* partly because the further back into the decades one goes, the fewer the eyewitnesses who are left, and therefore the light of common knowledge has gone out and darkness has set in, and the written chronicles either do not exist or are kept under lock and key. Also, it is not entirely fair to consider in a single category the especially brutal years of the Civil War and the first years of peacetime, when mercy might have been expected.

But even before there was any Civil War, it could be seen that Russia, due to the makeup of its population, was obviously not suited for any sort of socialism whatsoever. It was totally polluted. One of the first blows of the dictatorship was directed against the Cadets—the members of the *Constitutional Democratic Party.* (Under the Tsar they had constituted the most dangerous ranks of revolution, and under the government of the proletariat they represented the most dangerous ranks of reaction.) At the end of November, 1917, on the occasion of the first scheduled convening of the Constituent Assembly, which did not take place, the Cadet Party was outlawed and arrests of its members began. At about the same time, people associated with the "Alliance for the Constituent Assembly" and the students enrolled in the "soldiers' universities" were being *thrown in the jug.*

Knowing the sense and spirit of the Revolution, it is easy to guess that during these months such central prisons as Kresty in Petrograd and the Butyrki in Moscow, and many provincial prisons like them, were filled with wealthy men, prominent public figures, generals and officers, as well as officials of ministries and of the state apparatus who refused to carry out the orders of the new authority. One of the first operations of the Cheka was to arrest the entire committee of the All-Russian Union of Employees.

One of the first circulars of the NKVD, in December, 1917, stated: "In view of sabotage by officials . . . use maximum initiative in localities, *not excluding* confiscations, compulsion, and arrests."[1]

And even though V. I. Lenin, at the end of 1917, in order to establish "strictly revolutionary order," demanded "merciless suppression of attempts at anarchy on the part of drunkards, hooligans, counterrevolutionaries, and other persons"[2]—in other words, foresaw that drunkards and hooligans represented the principal danger to the October Revolution, with counterrevolutionaries somewhere back in third place—he nonetheless put the problem more broadly. In his essay "How to Organize the Competition" (January 7 and 10, 1918), V. I. Lenin proclaimed the common, united purpose of "purging the Russian land of all kinds of harmful insects."[3] And under the term *insects* he included not only all class enemies but also "workers malingering at their work"—for example, the typesetters of the Petrograd Party printing shops. (That is what time does. It is difficult for us nowadays to understand how workers who had just become *dictators* were immediately inclined to malinger at work they were doing for themselves.) And then again: "In what block of a big city, in what factory, in what village . . . are there not . . . saboteurs who call themselves intellectuals?"[4] True, the forms of insect-purging which Lenin conceived of in this essay were most varied: in some places they would be placed under arrest, in other places set to cleaning latrines; in some, "after having served their time in punishment cells, they would be handed yellow tickets"; in others, *parasites would be shot*; elsewhere you could take your pick of imprisonment "or punishment at forced labor of the hardest kind."[5] Even though he perceived and suggested the basic directions punishment should take, Vladimir Ilyich proposed that "communes and communities" should compete to find the best methods of purging.

It is not possible for us at this time fully to investigate exactly

1. *Vestnik NKVD* (*NKVD Herald*), 1917, No. 1, p. 4.
2. Lenin, *Sobrannye Sochineniya* (*Collected Works*), fifth edition, Vol. 35, p. 68.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

who fell within the broad definition of *insects*; the population of Russia was too heterogeneous and encompassed small, special groups, entirely superfluous and, today, forgotten. The people in the local zemstvo self-governing bodies in the provinces were, of course, insects. People in the cooperative movement were also insects, as were all owners of their own homes. There were not a few insects among the teachers in the gymnasiums. The church parish councils were made up almost exclusively of insects, and it was insects, of course, who sang in church choirs. All priests were insects—and monks and nuns even more so. And all those Tolstoyans who, when they undertook to serve the Soviet government on, for example, the railroads, refused to sign the required oath to defend the Soviet government with *gun* in hand thereby showed themselves to be insects too. (We will later see some of them on trial.) The railroads were particularly important, for there were indeed many insects hidden beneath railroad uniforms, and they had to be *rooted out* and some of them *slapped down.* And telegraphers, for some reason, were, for the most part, inveterate insects who had no sympathy for the Soviets. Nor could you say a good word about *Vikzhel,* the All-Russian Executive Committee of the Union of Railroad Workers, nor about the other trade unions, which were often filled with insects hostile to the working class.

Just those groups we have so far enumerated represent an enormous number of people—several years' worth of purge activity.

In addition, how many kinds of cursed intellectuals there were —restless students and a variety of eccentrics, truth-seekers, and holy fools, of whom even Peter the Great had tried in vain to purge Russia and who are always a hindrance to a well-ordered, strict regime.

It would have been impossible to carry out this hygienic purging, especially under wartime conditions, if they had had to follow outdated legal processes and normal judicial procedures. And so an entirely new form was adopted: *extrajudicial reprisal,* and this thankless job was self-sacrificingly assumed by the Cheka, the Sentinel of the Revolution, which was the only punitive organ in human history that combined in one set of hands investigation, arrest, interrogation, prosecution, trial, and execution of the *verdict.*

In 1918, in order to speed up the cultural victory of the Revolution as well, they began to ransack the churches and throw out the relics of saints, and to carry off church plate. Popular disorders broke out in defense of the plundered churches and monasteries. Here and there the alarm bells rang out, and the true Orthodox believers rushed forth, some of them with clubs. Naturally, some had to be *expended* right on the spot and others arrested.

In considering now the period from 1918 to 1920, we are in difficulties: Should we classify among the prison waves all those who were done in before they even got to prison cells? And in what classification should we put those whom the Committees of the Poor took behind the wing of the village soviet or to the rear of the courtyard, and *finished off* right there? Did the participants in the clusters of plots uncovered in every province (two in Ryazan; one in Kostroma, Vyshni Volochek, and Velizh; several in Kiev; several in Moscow; one in Saratov, Chernigov, Astrakhan, Seliger, Smolensk, Bobruisk, the Tambov Cavalry, Chembar, Velikiye Luki, Mstislavl, etc.) at least succeed in setting foot on the land of the Archipelago, or did they not—and are they therefore not related to the subject of our investigations? Bypassing the repression of the now famous rebellions (Yaroslavl, Murom, Rybinsk, Arzamas), we know of certain events only by their names—for instance, the Kolpino executions of June, 1918. What were they? Who were they? And where should they be classified?

There is also no little difficulty in deciding whether we should classify among the prison waves or on the balance sheets of the Civil War those tens of thousands of *hostages*, i.e., people not personally accused of anything, those peaceful citizens not even listed by name, who were taken off and destroyed simply to terrorize or wreak vengeance on a military enemy or a rebellious population. After August 30, 1918, the NKVD ordered the localities "to arrest immediately *all* Right Socialist Revolutionaries and to take *a significant number of hostages* from the bourgeoisie and military officers."[6] (This was just as if, for example, after the attempt of Aleksandr Ulyanov's group to assassinate the Tsar, not only its members but *all* the students in Russia and a *significant number of zemstvo officials* had been arrested.) By

6. *Vestnik NKVD*, 1918, No. 21–22, p. 1.

a decree of the Defense Council of February 15, 1919—apparently with Lenin in the chair—the Cheka and the NKVD were ordered to take hostage *peasants* from those localities where the removal of snow from railroad tracks "was not proceeding satisfactorily," and "if the snow removal did not take place they were to be shot."[7] (At the end of 1920, by decree of the Council of People's Commissars, permission was given to take Social Democrats as hostages too.)

But even restricting ourselves to ordinary arrests, we can note that by the spring of 1918 a torrent of socialist traitors had already begun that was to continue without slackening for many years. All these parties—the SR's, the Mensheviks, the Anarchists, the Popular Socialists—had for decades only pretended to be revolutionaries; they had worn socialism only as a mask, and for that they went to hard labor, still pretending. Only during the violent course of the Revolution was the bourgeois essence of these socialist traitors discovered. What could be more natural than to begin arresting them! Soon after the outlawing of the Cadets, the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly, the disarming of the Preobrazhensky and other regiments, they began in a small way to arrest, quietly at first, both SR's and Mensheviks. After June 14, 1918, the day members of these parties were excluded from all the soviets, the arrests proceeded in a more intensive and more coordinated fashion. From July 6 on, they began to deal with the Left SR's in the same way, though the Left SR's had been cleverer and had gone on pretending longer that they were allies of the one and only consistent party of the proletariat. From then on, it was enough for a workers' protest, a disturbance, a strike, to occur at any factory or in any little town (and there were many of them in the summer of 1918; and in March, 1921, they shook Petrograd, Moscow, and then Kronstadt and forced the inauguration of the NEP), and—coinciding with concessions, assurances, and the satisfaction for the just demands of the workers—the Cheka began silently to pick up Mensheviks and SR's at night as being the people truly to blame for these disorders. In the summer of 1918 and in April and October of 1919, they jailed Anarchists right and

7. *Dekrety Sovetskoi Vlasti* (*Decrees of the Soviet Regime*), Vol. 4, Moscow, 1968, p. 627.

left. In 1919 they arrested all the members of the SR Central Committee they could catch—and kept them imprisoned in the Butyrki up to the time of their trial in 1922. In that same year, Latsis, a leading Chekist, wrote of the Mensheviks: "People of this sort are more than a mere hindrance to us. That is why we remove them from our path, so they won't get under our feet. . . . We put them away in a secluded, cozy place, in the Butyrki, and we are going to keep them there until the struggle between capital and labor comes to an end."[8] In 1919, also, the delegates to the Non-Party Workers Congress were arrested; as a result, the Congress never took place.[9]

In 1919, suspicion of our Russians returning from abroad was already having its effect (Why? What was their alleged assignment?)—thus the officers of the Russian expeditionary force in France were imprisoned on their homecoming.

In 1919, too, what with the big hauls in connection with such actual and pseudo plots as the "National Center" and the "Military Plot," executions were carried out in Moscow, Petrograd, and other cities *on the basis of lists*—in other words, free people were simply arrested and executed immediately, and right and left those elements of the intelligentsia considered *close to the Cadets* were raked into prison. (What does the term "close to the Cadets" mean? *Not* monarchist and *not* socialist: in other words, all scientific circles, all university circles, all artistic, literary, yes, and, of course, all engineering circles. Except for the extremist writers, except for the theologians and theoreticians of socialism, all the rest of the intelligentsia, 80 percent of it, was "close to the Cadets.") In that category, for example, Lenin placed the writer Korolenko—"a pitiful petty bourgeois, imprisoned in bourgeois prejudices."[10] He considered it was "not amiss" for such "talents" to spend a few weeks in prison.[11] From Gorky's protests we learn of individual groups that were arrested. On September 15, 1919, Lenin replied to him: "It is clear to us that there were some mistakes." But: "What a

8. M. I. Latsis, *Dva Goda Borby na Vnutrennom Fronte; Populyarni Obzor Deyatelnosti ChK (Two Years of Struggle on the Home Front; Popular Review of the Activity of the Cheka)*, Moscow, GIZ, 1920, p. 61.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
10. Lenin, fifth edition, Vol. 51, pp. 47, 48.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

misfortune, just think about it! What injustice!"[12] And he advised Gorky "not to waste [his] energy whimpering over rotten intellectuals."[13]

From January, 1919, on, food requisitioning was organized and food-collecting detachments were set up. They encountered resistance everywhere in the rural areas, sometimes stubborn and passive, sometimes violent. The suppression of this opposition gave rise to an abundant flood of arrests during the course of the next two years, not counting those who were shot on the spot.

I am deliberately bypassing here the major part of the grinding done by the Cheka, the Special Branches, and the Revolutionary Tribunals as the front line advanced and cities and provinces were occupied. And that same NKVD directive of August 30, 1918, ordered that efforts be made to ensure "the unconditional execution of all who had been involved in White Guard work." But sometimes it is not clear where to draw the line. By the summer of 1920, for example, the Civil War had not entirely ended everywhere. But it was over on the Don; nonetheless officers were sent from there en masse—from Rostov, and from Novocherkassk—to Archangel, whence they were transported to the Solovetsky Islands, and, it is said, several of the barges were sunk in the White Sea and in the Caspian Sea. Now should this be billed to the Civil War or to the beginning of peacetime reconstruction? In Novocherkassk, in the same year, they shot the pregnant wife of an officer because she had hidden her husband. In what classification should she be put?

In May, 1920, came the well-known decree of the Central Committee "on Subversive Activity in the Rear." We know from experience that every such decree is a call for a new wave of widespread arrests; it is the outward sign of such a wave.

A particular difficulty—and also a particular advantage—in the organization of all these waves was the absence of a criminal code or any system of criminal law whatsoever before 1922. Only a revolutionary sense of justice (always infallible) guided those doing the purging and managing the sewage system when they were deciding whom to *take* and what to do with them.

In this survey we are not going to investigate the successive

12. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

waves of habitual criminals (ugolovniki) and nonpolitical offenders (bytoviki). Therefore we will merely recall that the country-wide poverty and shortages during the period when the government, all institutions, and the laws themselves were being reorganized could serve only to increase greatly the number of thefts, robberies, assaults, bribes, and the resale of merchandise for excessive profit (speculation). Even though these crimes presented less danger to the existence of the Republic, they, too, had to be repressed, and their own waves of prisoners served to swell the waves of counterrevolutionaries. And there was *speculation*, too, of a purely political character, as was pointed out in the decree of the Council of People's Commissars signed by Lenin on July 22, 1918: "Those guilty of selling, or buying up, or keeping for sale in the way of business food products which have been placed under the monopoly of the Republic [A peasant keeps grains for sale in the way of business. What else is his business anyway?] . . . imprisonment for a term of *not less* than ten years, combined with the *most severe* forced labor and confiscation of *all* their property."

From that summer on, the countryside, which had already been strained to the utmost limits, gave up its harvest year after year without compensation. This led to peasant revolts and, in the upshot, suppression of the revolts and new arrests.[14] It was in 1920 that we knew (or failed to know) of the trial of the "Siberian Peasants' Union." And at the end of 1920 the repression of the Tambov peasants' rebellion began. There was no trial for them.

But the main drive to uproot people from the Tambov villages took place mostly in June, 1921. Throughout the province concentration camps were set up for the families of peasants who had taken part in the revolts. Tracts of open field were enclosed with barbed wire strung on posts, and for three weeks every family of a suspected rebel was confined there. If within that time the man of the family did not turn up to buy his family's way out with his own head, they sent the family into exile.[15]

Even earlier, in March, 1921, the rebellious Kronstadt sailors,

14. "The hardest-working sector of the nation was positively uprooted." Korolenko, letter to Gorky, August 10, 1921.

15. Tukhachevsky, "Borba s Kontrrevolyutsionnymi Vostaniyami" ("The Struggle Against Counterrevolutionary Revolts"), in *Voina i Revolyutsiya* (*War and Revolution*), 1926, No. 7/8.

minus those who had been shot, were sent to the islands of the Archipelago via the Trubetskoi bastion of the Peter and Paul Fortress.

That same year, 1921, began with Cheka Order No. 10, dated January 8: "To *intensify* the repression of the bourgeoisie." Now, when the Civil War had ended, repression was not to be reduced but *intensified!* Voloshin has pictured for us in several of his poems how this worked out in the Crimea.

In the summer of 1921, the State Commission for Famine Relief, including Kuskova, Prokopovich, Kishkin, and others, was arrested. They had tried to combat the unprecedented famine in Russia. The heart of the matter, however, was that theirs were the *wrong hands* to be offering food and could not be allowed to feed the starving. The chairman of this commission, the dying Korolenko, who was pardoned, called the destruction of the commission "the worst of dirty political tricks, a dirty political trick by the government."[16]

In that same year the practice of arresting *students* began (for example, the group of Yevgeniya Doyarenko in the Timiryazev Academy) for "criticism of the system" (not in public, merely in conversation among themselves). Such cases, however, were evidently few, because the group in question was interrogated by Menzhinsky and Yagoda personally.

Also in 1921 the arrests of members of all non-Bolshevik parties were expanded and systematized. In fact, all Russia's political parties had been buried, except the victorious one. (Oh, do not dig a grave for someone else!) And so that the dissolution of these parties would be irreversible, it was necessary that their members should disintegrate and their physical bodies too.

Not one citizen of the former Russian state who had ever joined a party other than the Bolshevik Party could avoid his fate. He was condemned unless, like Maisky or Vyshinsky, he succeeded in making his way across the planks of the wreck to the Bolsheviks. He might not be arrested in the first group. He might live on, depending on how dangerous he was believed to be, until 1922, 1932, or even 1937, but the lists were kept; his

16. Korolenko's letter to Gorky, September 14, 1921. Korolenko also reminds us of a particularly important situation in the prisons of 1921: "Everywhere they are saturated with typhus." This has been confirmed by Skripnikova and others imprisoned at the time.

turn would and did come; he was arrested or else politely invited to an interrogation, where he was asked just one question: Had he been a member of such and such, from then till then? (There were also questions about hostile activity, but the first question decided everything, as is clear to us now, decades later.) From there on his fate might vary. Some were put immediately in one of the famous Tsarist central prisons—fortunately, all the Tsarist central prisons had been well preserved—and some socialists even ended up in the very same cells and with the very same jailers they had had before. Others were offered the opportunity of going into exile—oh, not for long, just for two or three years. And some had it even easier: they were merely given a *minus* (a certain number of cities were forbidden) and told to pick out a new place of residence *themselves,* and for the future would they please be so kind as to stay fixed in that one place and await the pleasure of the GPU.

This whole operation was stretched out over many years because it was of primary importance that it be stealthy and unnoticed. It was essential to clean out, conscientiously, socialists of every other stripe from Moscow, Petrograd, the ports, the industrial centers, and, later on, the outlying provinces as well. This was a grandiose silent game of solitaire, whose rules were totally incomprehensible to its contemporaries, and whose outlines we can appreciate only now. Someone's far-seeing mind, someone's neat hands, planned it all, without letting one wasted minute go by. They picked up a card which had spent three years in one pile and softly placed it on another pile. And the person who had been imprisoned in a central prison was thereby shifted into exile—and a good way off. Someone who had served out a "minus" sentence was sent into exile, too, but out of sight of the rest of the "minus" category, or else from exile to exile, and then back again into the central prison—but this time a different one. Patience, overwhelming patience, was the trait of the person playing out the solitaire. And without any noise, without any outcry, the members of all the other parties slipped gradually out of sight, lost all connection with the places and people where they and their revolutionary activities were known, and thus—imperceptibly and mercilessly—was prepared the annihilation of those who had once raged against tyranny at

student meetings and had clanked their Tsarist shackles in pride.[17]

In this game of the Big Solitaire, the majority of the old political prisoners, survivors of hard labor, were destroyed, for it was primarily the SR's and the Anarchists—not the Social Democrats—who had received the harshest sentences from the Tsarist courts. They in particular had made up the population of the Tsarist hard-labor political prisons.

There was justice in the priorities of destruction, however; in 1920 they were all offered the chance to renounce in writing their parties and party ideologies. Some declined—and they, naturally, came up first for annihilation. Others signed such renunciations, and thereby added a few years to their lifetimes. But their turn, too, came implacably, and their heads rolled implacably from their shoulders.[18]

In the spring of 1922 the Extraordinary Commission for Struggle Against Counterrevolution, Sabotage, and Speculation, the Cheka, recently renamed the GPU, decided to intervene in church affairs. It was called on to carry out a "church revolution"—to remove the existing leadership and replace it with one which would have only one ear turned to heaven and the other to the Lubyanka. The so-called "Living Church" people seemed to go along with this plan, but without outside help they could not gain control of the church apparatus. For this reason, the Patriarch Tikhon was arrested and two resounding trials were held, followed by the execution in Moscow of those who had publicized the Patriarch's appeal and, in Petrograd, of the Metropolitan Veniamin, who had attempted to hinder the transfer of ecclesiastical power to the "Living Church" group. Here and there in the provincial centers and even further down in the

17. V. G. Korolenko wrote to Gorky, June 29, 1921: "History will someday note that the Bolshevik Revolution used the same means to deal with true revolutionaries and socalists as did the Tsarist regime, in other words, purely police measures."

18. Sometimes, reading a newspaper article, one is astonished to the point of disbelief. In *Izvestiya* of May 24, 1959, one could read that a year after Hitler came to power Maximilian Hauke was arrested for belonging to none other than the Communist Party. Was he destroyed? No, they sentenced him to *two* years. After this was he, naturally, sentenced to a second term? No, he was released. You can interpret that as you please! He proceeded to live quietly and build an underground organization, in connection with which the *Izvestiya* article on his courage appeared.

administrative districts, metropolitans and bishops were arrested, and, as always, in the wake of the big fish, followed shoals of smaller fry: archpriests, monks, and deacons. These arrests were not even reported in the press. They also arrested those who refused to swear to support the "Living Church" "renewal" movement.

Men of religion were an inevitable part of every annual "catch," and their silver locks gleamed in every cell and in every prisoner transport en route to the Solovetsky Islands.

From the early twenties on, arrests were also made among groups of theosophists, mystics, spiritualists. (Count Palen's group used to keep official transcripts of its communications with the spirit world.) Also, religious societies and philosophers of the Berdyayev circle. The so-called "Eastern Catholics"—followers of Vladimir Solovyev—were arrested and destroyed in passing, as was the group of A. I. Abrikosova. And, of course, ordinary Roman Catholics—Polish Catholic priests, etc.—were arrested, too, as part of the normal course of events.

However, the root destruction of religion in the country, which throughout the twenties and thirties was one of the most important goals of the GPU-NKVD, could be realized only by mass arrests of Orthodox believers. Monks and nuns, whose black habits had been a distinctive feature of Old Russian life, were intensively rounded up on every hand, placed under arrest, and sent into exile. They arrested and sentenced active laymen. The circles kept getting bigger, as they raked in ordinary believers as well, old people, and particularly women, who were the most stubborn believers of all and who, for many long years to come, would be called "nuns" in transit prisons and in camps.

True, they were supposedly being arrested and tried not for their actual faith but for openly declaring their convictions and for bringing up their children in the same spirit. As Tanya Khodkevich wrote:

> You can pray *freely*
> But just so God alone can hear.

(She received a ten-year sentence for these verses.) A person convinced that he possessed spiritual truth was required to conceal it from his own children! In the twenties the religious education of

children was classified as a political crime under Article 58-10 of the Code—in other words, counterrevolutionary propaganda! True, one was still permitted to renounce one's religion at one's trial: it didn't often happen but it nonetheless did happen that the father would renounce his religion and remain at home to raise the children while the mother went to the Solovetsky Islands. (Throughout all those years women manifested great firmness in their faith.) All persons convicted of religious activity received *tenners*, the longest term then given.

(In those years, particularly in 1927, in purging the big cities for the pure society that was coming into being, they sent prostitutes to the Solovetsky Islands along with the "nuns." Those lovers of a sinful earthly life were given *three*-year sentences under a more lenient article of the Code. The conditions in prisoner transports, in transit prisons, and on the Solovetsky Islands were not of a sort to hinder them from plying their merry trade among the administrators and the convoy guards. And three years later they would return with laden suitcases to the places they had come from. Religious prisoners, however, were prohibited from ever returning to their children and their home areas.)

As early as the early twenties, waves appeared that were purely national in character—at first not very large in proportion to the populations of their homelands, especially by Russian yardsticks: Mussavatists from Azerbaijan; Dashnaks from Armenia; Georgian Mensheviks; and Turkmenian Basmachi, who were resisting the establishment of Soviet power in Central Asia. (The first Central Asian soviets were Russian in makeup by an overwhelming majority, and were therefore seen as outposts of Russian power.) In 1926 the Zionist society of "Hehalutz" was exiled in toto—since it had failed to respond to the all-powerful upsurge of internationalism.

Among subsequent generations, a picture has evolved of the twenties as some kind of holiday of totally unlimited freedom. In this book we shall encounter people who viewed the twenties quite differently. The non-Party students at this time sought "autonomy for higher educational institutions," the right of assembly, and the removal from the curriculum of excessive political indoctrination. Arrests were the answer. These were intensified during holidays—for example, on May 1, 1924. In 1925, about one hundred Lenin-

grad students were sentenced to three years in political detention for reading the *Sotsialistichesky Vestnik*—the organ of the Mensheviks abroad—and for studying Plekhanov. (In his youth Plekhanov himself had gotten off far more lightly for speaking out against the government in front of Kazan Cathedral.) In 1925 they had already begun to arrest the first (young) Trotskyites. (Two naïve Red Army men, remembering the Russian tradition, began to collect funds for the arrested Trotskyites—and they, too, were put in political detention.)

And, of course, it is obvious that the exploiting classes were not spared. Throughout the twenties the hunt continued for former officers who had managed to survive: "Whites" (those who had not already earned execution during the Civil War); "White-Reds," who had fought on both sides; and "Tsarist Reds," Tsarist officers who had gone over to the Red Army but had not served in it for the whole period or who had gaps in their army service records and no documents to account for them. They were truly put through the mill because instead of being sentenced immediately they, too, were put through the solitaire game: endless verifications, limitations on the kind of work they could do and on where they could live; they were taken into custody, released, taken into custody again. And only gradually did they proceed to the camps, from which they did not return.

However, sending these officers to the Archipelago did not end the problem but only set it in motion. After all, their mothers, wives, and children were still at liberty. With the help of unerring social analysis it was easy to see what kind of mood they were in after the heads of their households had been arrested. And thus they simply compelled their own arrest too! And one more wave was set rolling.

In the twenties there was an amnesty for Cossacks who had taken part in the Civil War. Many of them returned from the island of Lemnos to the Kuban, where they were given land. All of them were subsequently arrested.

And, of course, all former state officials had gone into hiding and were likewise liable to be hunted down. They had hidden well and disguised themselves cleverly, making use of the fact that there was as yet no internal passport system nor any unified system of work-books in the Republic—and they managed to creep into

Soviet institutions. In such cases, slips of the tongue, chance recognitions, and the denunciations of neighbors helped battle-intelligence—so to speak. (Sometimes sheer accident took a hand. Solely out of a love of order, a certain Mova kept at home a list of all former employees of the provincial judiciary. This was discovered by accident in 1925, and they were all arrested and shot.)

And so the waves rolled on—for "concealment of social origin" and for "former social origin." This received the widest interpretation. They arrested members of the nobility for their social origin. They arrested members of their families. Finally, unable to draw even simple distinctions, they arrested members of the *"individual nobility"*—i.e., anybody who had simply graduated from a university. And once they had been arrested, there was no way back. You can't undo what has been done! The Sentinel of the Revolution never makes a mistake!

(No. There were a few ways back! The *counterwaves* were thin, sparse, but they did sometimes break through. The first is worthy of mention right here. Among the wives and daughters of the nobility and the officers there were quite often women of outstanding personal qualities and attractive appearance. Some succeeded in breaking through in a small *reverse* wave! They were the ones who remembered that life is given to us only once and that nothing is more precious to us than *our own life*. They offered their services to the Cheka-GPU as informers, as colleagues, in any capacity whatsoever—and those who were liked were accepted. These were the most fertile of all informers! They helped the GPU a great deal, because "former" people trusted them. Here one can name the last Princess Vyazemskaya, a most prominent postrevolutionary informer [as was her son on the Solovetsky Islands]. And Konkordiya Nikolayevna Iosse was evidently a woman of brilliant qualities: her husband was an officer who had been shot in her presence, and she herself was exiled to the Solovetsky Islands. But she managed to beg her way out and to set up a salon near the Big Lubyanka which the important figures of that establishment loved to frequent. She was not arrested again until 1937, along with her Yagoda customers.)

It is strange to recount, but as a result of an absurd tradition the Political Red Cross had been preserved from Old Russia.

There were three branches: the Moscow branch (Y. Peshkova-Vinaver); the Kharkov (Sandormirskaya); and the Petrograd. The one in Moscow behaved itself and was not dissolved until 1937. The one in Petrograd (the old Narodnik Shevtsov, the cripple Gartman, and Kocherovsky) adopted an intolerably impudent stance, mixed into political cases, tried to get support from such former inmates of the Schlüsselburg Prison as Novorussky, who had been convicted in the same case as Lenin's brother, Aleksandr Ulyanov, and helped not only socialists but also KR's —Counter-Revolutionaries. In 1926 it was shut down and its leaders were sent into exile.

The years go by, and everything that has not been freshly recalled to us is wiped from our memory. In the dim distance, we see the year 1927 as a careless, well-fed year of the still untruncated NEP. But in fact it was tense; it shuddered as newspaper headlines exploded; and it was considered at the time, and portrayed to us then, as the threshold of a war for world revolution. The assassination of the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw, which filled whole columns of the papers that June, aroused Mayakovsky to dedicate four thunderous verses to the subject.

But here's bad luck for you: Poland offered an apology; Voikov's lone assassin was arrested there—and so how and against whom was the poet's appeal to be directed?[19]

With cohesion,
construction,
grit,
and *repression*

Wring the neck
of this gang run riot!

Who was to be repressed? Whose neck should be wrung? It was then that the so-called *Voikov draft* began. As always happened when there were incidents of disturbance or tension, they arrested *former* people: Anarchists, SR's, Mensheviks, and also *the intel-*

19. Evidently, the monarchist in question assassinated Voikov as an act of private vengeance: it is said that as Urals Provincial Commissar of Foodstuffs, in July, 1918, P. L. Voikov had directed the destruction of all traces of the shooting of the Tsar's family (the dissection and dismemberment of the corpses, the cremation of the remains, and the dispersal of the ashes).

ligentsia as such. Indeed, who else was there to arrest in the cities? Not the working class!

But the old "close-to-the-Cadets" intelligentsia had already been thoroughly shaken up, starting in 1919. Had the time not come to shake up that part of the intelligentsia which imagined itself to be progressive? To give the students a once-over? Once again Mayakovsky came to the rescue:

Think
about the Komsomol
for days and for weeks!

Look over
your ranks,
watch them with care.

Are all of them
really
Komsomols?

Or are they
only
pretending to be?

A convenient world outlook gives rise to a convenient juridical term: *social prophylaxis.* It was introduced and accepted, and it was immediately understood by all. (Lazar Kogan, one of the bosses of the White Sea Canal construction, would, in fact, soon say: "I believe that you personally were not guilty of anything. But, as an educated person, you have to understand that social prophylaxis was being widely applied!") And when else, in fact, should unreliable fellow travelers, all that shaky intellectual rot, be arrested, if not on the eve of the war for world revolution? When the big war actually began, it would be too late.

And so in Moscow they began a systematic search, block by block. Someone had to be arrested everywhere. The slogan was: "We are going to bang our fist on the table so hard that the world will shake with terror!" It was to the Lubyanka, to the Butyrki, that the Black Marias, the passenger cars, the enclosed trucks, the open hansom cabs kept moving, even by day. There was a jam at the gates, a jam in the courtyard. They didn't have time to unload and register those they'd arrested. (And the same situation existed

in other cities. In Rostov-on-the-Don during those days the floor was so crowded in the cellar of House 33 that the newly arrived Boiko could hardly find a place to sit down.)

A typical example from this wave: Several dozen young people got together for some kind of musical evening which had not been authorized ahead of time by the GPU. They listened to music and then drank tea. They got the money for the tea by voluntarily contributing their own kopecks. It was quite clear, of course, that this music was a cover for counterrevolutionary sentiments, and that the money was being collected not for tea but to assist the dying world bourgeoisie. And they were *all* arrested and given from three to ten years—Anna Skripnikova getting five, while Ivan Nikolayevich Varentsov and the other organizers of the affair who refused to confess were *shot!*

And in that same year, somewhere in Paris, a group of Russian émigré Lycée graduates gathered to celebrate the traditional Pushkin holiday. A report of this was published in the papers. It was clearly an intrigue on the part of mortally wounded imperialism, and as a result *all* Lycée graduates still left in the U.S.S.R. were arrested, as were the so-called "law students" (graduates of another such privileged special school of prerevolutionary Russia).

Only the size of SLON—the Solovetsky Special Purpose Camp—limited for the time being the scale of the Voikov draft. But the Gulag Archipelago had already begun its malignant life and would shortly metastasize throughout the whole body of the nation.

A new taste had been acquired and a new appetite began to grow. The time had long since arrived to crush the technical intelligentsia, which had come to regard itself as too irreplaceable and had not gotten used to catching instructions on the wing.

In other words, we never did trust the engineers—and from the very first years of the Revolution we saw to it that those lackeys and servants of former capitalist bosses were kept in line by healthy suspicion and surveillance by the workers. However, during the reconstruction period, we did permit them to work in our industries, while the whole force of the class assault was directed against the rest of the intelligentsia. But the more our own economic leadership matured—in VSNKh (the Supreme Council

of the Economy) and Gosplan (the State Planning Commission) —the more the number of plans increased, and the more those plans overlapped and conflicted with one another, the clearer became the old engineers' basic commitment to wrecking, their insincerity, slyness, venality. The Sentinel of the Revolution narrowed its eyes with even greater vigilance—and wherever it directed its narrowed gaze it immediately discovered a nest of wreckers.

This therapy continued full speed from 1927 on, and immediately exposed to the proletariat all the causes of our economic failures and shortages. There was wrecking in the People's Commissariat of Railroads—that was why it was hard to get aboard a train, why there were interruptions in supplies. There was wrecking in the Moscow Electric Power System—and interruptions in power. There was wrecking in the oil industry—hence the shortage of kerosene. There was wrecking in textiles—hence nothing for a workingman to wear. In the coal industry there was colossal wrecking—hence no heat! In the metallurgy, defense, machinery, shipbuilding, chemical, mining, gold and platinum industries, in irrigation, everywhere there were these pus-filled boils of wrecking! Enemies with slide rules were on all sides. The GPU puffed and panted in its efforts to grab off and drag off the "wreckers." In the capitals and in the provinces, GPU collegiums and proletarian courts kept hard at work, sifting through this viscous sewage, and every day the workers gasped to learn (and sometimes they didn't learn) from the papers of new vile deeds. They learned about Palchinsky, von Meck, and Velichko,[20] and how many others who were nameless. Every industry, every factory, and every handicraft artel had to find wreckers in its ranks, and no sooner had they begun to look than they found them (with the help of the GPU). If any prerevolutionary engineer was not yet exposed as a traitor, then he could certainly be suspected of being one.

And what accomplished villains these old engineers were! What diabolical ways to sabotage they found! Nikolai Karlovich von Meck, of the People's Commissariat of Railroads, pretended to

20. A. F. Velichko, a military engineer, former professor of the Military Academy of the General Staff, and a lieutenant general, had been in charge of the Administration for Military Transport in the Tsarist War Ministry. He was shot. Oh, how useful he would have been in 1941!

be terribly devoted to the development of the new economy, and would hold forth for hours on end about the economic problems involved in the construction of socialism, and he loved to give advice. One such pernicious piece of advice was to increase the size of freight trains and not worry about heavier than average loads. The GPU exposed von Meck, and he was shot: his objective had been to wear out rails and roadbeds, freight cars and locomotives, so as to leave the Republic without railroads in case of foreign military intervention! When, not long afterward, the new People's Commissar of Railroads, Comrade Kaganovich, ordered that average loads should be increased, and even doubled and tripled them (and for this discovery received the Order of Lenin along with others of our leaders)—the malicious engineers who protested became known as *limiters*. They raised the outcry that this was too much, and would result in the breakdown of the rolling stock, and they were rightly shot for their lack of faith in the possibilities of socialist transport.

These *limiters* were pursued for several years. In all branches of the economy they brandished their formulas and calculations and refused to understand that bridges and lathes could respond to the enthusiasm of the personnel. (These were the years when all the norms of folk psychology were turned inside out: the circumspect folk wisdom expressed in such a proverb as "Haste makes waste" was ridiculed, and the ancient saying that "The slower you go, the farther you'll get" was turned inside out.) The only thing which at times delayed the arrest of the old engineers was the absence of a new batch to take their place. Nikolai Ivanovich Ladyzhensky, chief engineer of defense plants in Izhevsk, was first arrested for "limitation theories" and "blind faith in safety factors" (which explained why he considered inadequate the funds allocated by Ordzhonikidze for factory expansion).[21] Then they put him under house arrest and ordered him back to work in his old job. Without him the work was collapsing. He put it back in shape. But the funds allocated were just as inadequate as they had been earlier, and so once again he was thrown in prison, this time for "incorrect use of funds": the funds were insufficient, they

21. They say that when Ordzhonikidze used to talk with the old engineers, he would put one pistol on his desk beside his right hand and another beside his left.

charged, because the chief engineer had used them inefficiently! Ladyzhensky died in camp after a year of timbering.

Thus in the course of a few years they broke the back of the Old Russian engineers who had constituted the glory of the country, who were the beloved heroes of such writers as Garin-Mikhailovsky, Chekhov, and Zamyatin.

It is to be understood, of course, that in this wave, as in all of them, other people were taken too: for example, those who had been near and dear to and connected with those doomed. I hesitate to sully the shining bronze countenance of the Sentinel of the Revolution, yet I must: they also arrested persons who refused to become informers. We would ask the reader to keep in mind at all times, but especially in connection with the first postrevolutionary decade, this entirely secret wave, which never surfaced in public: at that time people still had their pride, and many of them quite failed to comprehend that morality is a relative thing, having only a narrow class meaning, and they dared to reject the employment offered them, and they were all punished without mercy. In fact, at this time young Magdalena Edzhubova was supposed to act as an informer on a group of engineers, and she not only dared to refuse but also told her guardian (it was against him she was supposed to inform). However, he was arrested soon anyway, and in the course of the investigation he confessed everything. Edzhubova, who was pregnant, was arrested for "revealing an operational secret" and was sentenced to be shot—but subsequently managed to get off with a twenty-five-year string of sentences. In that same year, 1927, though in a completely different milieu, among the leading Kharkov Communists, Nadezhda Vitalyevna Surovets refused to become an informer and spy on members of the Ukrainian government. For this she was arrested by the GPU, and not until a quarter of a century later did she manage to emerge, barely alive, in the Kolyma. As for those who didn't survive—of them we know nothing.

(In the thirties this wave of the disobedient fell off to zero: if they asked you to, then it meant you had to inform—where would you hide? "The weakest go to the wall." "If I don't, someone else will." "Better me than someone bad." Meanwhile there were plenty of volunteers; you couldn't get away from them: it was both profitable and praiseworthy.)

In 1928 in Moscow the big Shakhty case came to trial—big in terms of the publicity it was given, in the startling confessions and self-flagellation of the defendants (though not yet all of them). Two years later, in September, 1930, the *famine organizers* were tried with a great hue and cry. (They were the ones! There they are!) There were forty-eight wreckers in the food industry. At the end of 1930, the trial of the Promparty was put on with even greater fanfare. It had been faultlessly rehearsed. In this case every single defendant took upon himself the blame for every kind of filthy rubbish—and then, like a monument unveiled, there arose before the eyes of the workers the grandiose, cunningly contrived skein in which all the separate wrecking cases previously exposed were tied into one diabolical knot along with Milyukov, Ryabushinsky, Deterding, and Poincaré.

As we begin to understand our judicial practices, we realize now that the public trials were only the surface indications of the mole's tunnel, and that all the main digging lay beneath the surface. At these trials only a small number of those arrested were produced in court—only those who agreed to the unnatural practice of accusing themselves and others in the hope of getting off more easily. The majority of the engineers, who had the courage and intelligence to reject and refute the interrogators' stupidities, were tried out of earshot. But even though they did not confess, they got the same *tenners* from the Collegium of the GPU.

The waves flowed underground through the pipes; they provided sewage disposal for the life flowering on the surface.

It was precisely at this moment that an important step was taken toward universal participation in sewage disposal, universal distribution of responsibility for it. Those who had not yet been swept bodily down the sewer hatches, who had not yet been carried through the pipes to the Archipelago, had to march up above, carrying banners praising the trials, and rejoicing at the judicial reprisals. (And this was very farsighted! Decades would pass, and history would have its eyes opened, but the interrogators, judges, and prosecutors would turn out to be no more guilty than you and I, fellow citizens! The reason we possess our worthy gray heads is that in our time we worthily voted *"for."*)

Stalin carried out the first such effort in connection with the

trial of the *famine organizers*—and how could it not succeed when everyone was starving in bounteous Russia, and everyone was always looking about and asking: "Where did all our dear bread get to?" Therefore, before the court verdict, the workers and employees wrathfully voted for the death penalty for the scoundrels on trial. And by the time of the Promparty trial, there were universal meetings and demonstrations (including even schoolchildren). It was the newspaper march of millions, and the roar rose outside the windows of the courtroom: "Death! Death! Death!"

At this turning point in our history, there were some lonely voices of protest or abstention—and very, very great bravery was required to say "No!" in the midst of that roaring chorus of approval. It is incomparably easier today! (Yet even today people don't very often vote "*against.*") To the extent that we know about them, it was those same spineless, slushy intellectuals. At the meeting of the Leningrad Polytechnic Institute, Professor Dmitri Apollinaryevich Rozhansky *abstained* (he was an enemy of capital punishment *in general*, you see; in the language of science, you see, this was an *irreversible* process), and he was arrested then and there! The student Dima Olitsky abstained and was arrested then and there! Thus all these protests were silenced at the very source.

So far as we know, the gray-mustached working class approved these executions. So far as we know, from the blazing Komsomols right up to the Party leaders and the legendary army commanders, the entire vanguard waxed unanimous in approving these executions. Famous revolutionaries, theoreticians, and prophets, seven years before their own inglorious destruction, welcomed the roar of the crowd, not guessing then that their own time stood on the threshold, that soon their own names would be dragged down in that roar of *"Scum!" "Filth!"*

In fact, for the engineers the rout soon came to an end. At the beginning of 1931 Iosif Vissarionovich spake his "Six Conditions" for construction. And His Autocracy vouchsafed as the fifth condition: We must move from a policy of destruction of the old technical intelligentsia to a policy of concern for it, of making use of it.

Concern for it! What had happened in the meantime to our just

wrath? Where had all our terrible accusations gone to? At this very moment, as it happened, a trial of "wreckers" in the porcelain industry was under way (they had been playing their filthy tricks even there!). All the defendants had damned each other in unison and confessed to everything—and suddenly they cried out in unison again: "We are innocent!" And they were freed!

(There was even a small reverse wave to be remarked in this particular year: some engineers who had already been sentenced or put under interrogation were released. Thus D. A. Rozhansky came back. Should we not say he had won his duel with Stalin? And that if people had been heroic in exercising their civil responsibilities, there would never have been any reason to write either this chapter or this whole book?)

That same year Stalin was still engaged in grinding beneath his hoof the long-since prostrate Mensheviks. (There was a public trial in March, 1931, of the "All-Union Bureau of Mensheviks," Groman, Sukhanov,[22] and Yakubovich, and a certain number of small, scattered, unannounced arrests took place in addition.)

And suddenly Stalin "reconsidered."

The White Sea folk say of the tide, the water *reconsiders*, meaning the moment just before it begins to fall. Well, of course, it is inappropriate to compare the murky soul of Stalin with the water of the White Sea. And perhaps he didn't reconsider anything whatever. Nor was there any ebb tide. But one more miracle happened that year. In 1931, following the trial of the Promparty, a grandiose trial of the Working Peasants Party was being prepared—on the grounds that they existed (never, in actual fact!) as an enormous organized underground force among the rural intelligentsia, including leaders of consumer and agricultural cooperatives and the more advanced upper layer of the peasantry, and supposedly were preparing to overthrow the dictatorship of the proletariat. At the trial of the Promparty this Working Peasants Party—the TKP—was referred to as if it were already well known and under detention. The interrogation apparatus of

22. The Sukhanov referred to here was the same Sukhanov in whose apartment, on the Karpovka, in Petrograd, and with whose knowledge (and the guides there nowadays are lying when they say it was *without* his knowledge), the Bolshevik Central Committee met on October 10, 1917, and adopted its decision to launch an armed uprising.

the GPU was working flawlessly: *thousands* of defendants had already fully *confessed* their adherence to the TKP and participation in its criminal plans. And no less than *two hundred thousand* "members" altogether were promised by the GPU. Mentioned as "heading" the party were the agricultural economist Aleksandr Vasilyevich Chayanov; the future "Prime Minister" N. D. Kondratyev; L. N. Yurovsky; Makarov; and Aleksei Doyarenko, a professor from the Timiryazev Academy (future Minister of Agriculture).[23]

Then all of a sudden, one lovely night, Stalin *reconsidered.* Why? Maybe we will never know. Did he perhaps wish to save his soul? Too soon for that, it would seem. Did his sense of humor come to the fore—was it all so deadly, monotonous, so bitter-tasting? But no one would ever dare accuse Stalin of having a sense of humor! Likeliest of all, Stalin simply figured out that the whole countryside, not just 200,000 people, would soon die of famine anyway, so why go to the trouble? And instantly the whole TKP trial was called off. All those who had "confessed" were told they could *repudiate* their confessions (one can picture their happiness!). And instead of the whole big catch, only the small group of Kondratyev and Chayanov was hauled in and tried.[24] (In 1941, the charge against the tortured Vavilov was that the TKP had existed and he had been its head.)

Paragraph piles on paragraph, year on year—and yet there is no way we can describe in sequence everything that took place (but the GPU did its job effectively! The GPU never let anything get by!). But we must always remember that:

• Religious believers, of course, were being arrested uninterruptedly. (There were, nonetheless, certain special dates and peak periods. There was a "night of struggle against religion" in Leningrad on Christmas Eve, 1929, when they arrested a large part of the religious intelligentsia and held them—not just until morning either. And that was certainly no "Christmas tale."

23. He might well have been a better one than those who held the job for the next forty years! But how strange is human fate! As a matter of principle, Doyarenko was always nonpolitical! When his daughter used to bring home fellow students who expressed opinions savoring of Socialist Revolutionary views, he made them leave!

24. Kondratyev, sentenced to solitary confinement, became mentally ill there and died. Yurovsky also died. Chayanov was exiled to Alma-Ata after five years in solitary and was arrested again there in 1948.

Then in February, 1932, again in Leningrad, many churches were closed simultaneously, while, at the same time, large-scale arrests were made among the clergy. And there are still more dates and places, but they haven't been reported to us by anyone.)

• Non-Orthodox *sects* were also under constant attack, even those sympathetic to Communism. (Thus, in 1929, they arrested every last member of the *communes* between Sochi and Khosta. These communes ran everything—both production and distribution—on a Communist basis, and it was all done fairly and honestly, in a way the rest of the country won't achieve in a hundred years. But, alas, they were too literate; they were well read in religious literature; and atheism was not their philosophy, which combined Baptist and Tolstoyan beliefs with those of Yoga. It appeared that such a *commune* was criminal and that it could not bring people happiness.)

In the twenties, a large group of Tolstoyans was exiled to the foothills of the Altai and there they established communal settlements jointly with the Baptists. When the construction of the Kuznetsk industrial complex began, they supplied it with food products. Then arrests began—first the teachers (they were not teaching in accordance with the government programs), and the children ran after the cars, shouting. And after that the commune leaders were taken.

• The Big Solitaire game played with the socialists went on and on uninterruptedly—of course.

• In 1929, also, those historians who had not been sent abroad in time were arrested: Platonov, Tarle, Lyubavsky, Gotye, Likhachev, Izmailov, and the outstanding literary scholar M. M. Bakhtin.

• From one end of the country to the other, nationalities kept pouring in. The Yakuts were imprisoned after the revolt of 1928. The Buryat-Mongols were imprisoned after the uprising of 1929—and they say about 35,000 were shot, a figure it has been impossible to verify. The Kazakhs were imprisoned after Budenny's cavalry heroically crushed their revolt in 1930 and 1931. The Union for Liberation of the Ukraine was put on trial at the beginning of 1930 (Professor Yefremov, Chekhovsky, Nikovsky, etc.), and, knowing the ratio in our country of what is public to

what is secret, how many others followed in their footsteps? How many were secretly arrested?

Then came the time—slowly, it is true, but surely—when it was the turn of the members of the ruling Party to do time in prison! At first—from 1927 to 1929—it was a question of the "workers' opposition," in other words, the Trotskyites, who had chosen themselves such an unsuccessful leader. They numbered, hundreds at the start; soon there would be thousands. But it's the first step that's the hardest! Just as these Trotskyites had observed with approval the arrest of members of other parties, so the rest of the Party now watched approvingly as the Trotskyites were arrested. But everyone would have his turn. The nonexistent "rightist opposition" would come later, and, limb by limb, beginning with its own tail, the ravenous maw would devour itself . . . right up to its head.

From 1928 on, it was time to call to a reckoning those late stragglers after the bourgeoisie—the NEPmen. The usual practice was to impose on them ever-increasing and finally totally intolerable taxes. At a certain point they could no longer pay; they were immediately arrested for bankruptcy, and their property was confiscated. (Small tradesmen such as barbers, tailors, even those who repaired primus stoves, were only deprived of their licenses to ply their trade.)

There was an economic purpose to the development of the NEPmen wave. The state needed property and gold, and there was as yet no Kolyma. The famous *gold fever* began at the end of 1929, only the fever gripped not those looking for gold but those from whom it was being shaken loose. The particular feature of this new, "gold" wave was that the GPU was not actually accusing these rabbits of anything, and was perfectly willing not to send them off to Gulag country, but wished only to take away their gold by main force. So the prisons were packed, the interrogators were worn to a frazzle, but the transit prisons, prisoner transports, and camps received only relatively minor reinforcements.

Who was arrested in the "gold" wave? All those who, at one time or another, fifteen years before, had had a private "business," had been involved in retail trade, had earned wages at a craft, and *could have,* according to the GPU's deductions, hoarded gold.

But it so happened that they often had no gold. They had put their money into real estate or securities, which had melted away or been taken away in the Revolution, and nothing remained. They had high hopes, of course, in arresting dental technicians, jewelers, and watch repairmen. Through denunciations, one could learn about gold in the most unexpected places: a veteran lathe worker had somewhere gotten hold of, and held on to, sixty gold five-ruble pieces from Tsarist times. The famous Siberian partisan Muravyev had come to Odessa, bringing with him a small bag full of gold. The Petersburg Tatar draymen all had gold hidden away. Whether or not these things were so could be discovered only inside prison walls. Nothing—neither proletarian origin nor revolutionary services—served as a defense against a gold denunciation. All were arrested, all were crammed into GPU cells in numbers no one had considered possible up to then—but that was all to the good: they would *cough it up* all the sooner! It even reached a point of such confusion that men and women were imprisoned in the same cells and used the latrine bucket in each other's presence—who cared about those niceties? Give up your gold, vipers! The interrogators did not write up charge sheets because no one needed their papers. And whether or not a sentence would be pasted on was of very little interest. Only one thing was important: Give up your gold, viper! The state needs gold and you don't. The interrogators had neither voice nor strength left to threaten and torture; they had one universal method: feed the prisoners nothing but salty food and give them no water. Whoever coughed up gold got water! One gold piece for a cup of fresh water!

People perish for cold metal.

This wave was distinguished from those that preceded and followed it because, even though fewer than half its victims held their fate in their own hands, some did. If you in fact had no gold, then your situation was hopeless. You would be beaten, burned, tortured, and steamed to the point of death or until they finally came to believe you. But if you had gold, you could determine the extent of your torture, the limits of your endurance, and your own fate. Psychologically, this situation was, incidentally, not easier but more difficult, because if you made an error

you would always be ridden by a guilty conscience. Of course, anyone who had already mastered the rules of the institution would yield and give up his gold—that was easier. But it was a mistake to give it up too readily. They would refuse to believe you had coughed it all up, and they would continue to hold you. But you'd be wrong, too, to wait too long before yielding: you'd end up kicking the bucket or they'd paste *a term* on you out of meanness. One of the Tatar draymen endured all the tortures: he had no gold! They imprisoned his wife, too, and tortured her, but the Tatar stuck to his story: no gold! Then they arrested his daughter: the Tatar couldn't take it any more. He coughed up 100,000 rubles. At this point they let his family go, but slapped a prison term on him. The crudest detective stories and operas about brigands were played out in real life on a vast national scale.

The introduction of the passport system on the threshold of the thirties also provided the camps with a good-sized draft of reinforcements. Just as Peter I simplified the social structure, sweeping clean all the nooks and crannies of the old Russian class system, so our socialist passport system swept out, in particular, the betwixt-and-between insects. It hit at the clever, homeless portion of the population which wasn't tied down to anything. In the early stages, people made many mistakes with those passports—and those not registered at their places of residence, and those not registered as having left their former places of residence, were raked into the Archipelago, if only for a single year.

And so the waves foamed and rolled. But over them all, in 1929–1930, billowed and gushed the multimillion wave of *dispossessed kulaks*. It was immeasurably large and it could certainly not have been housed in even the highly developed network of Soviet interrogation prisons (which in any case were packed full by the "gold" wave). Instead, it bypassed the prisons, going directly to the transit prisons and camps, onto prisoner transports, into the Gulag country. In sheer size this nonrecurring tidal wave (it was an ocean) swelled beyond the bounds of anything the penal system of even an immense state can permit itself. There was nothing to be compared with it in all Russian history. It was the forced resettlement of a whole people, an ethnic catastrophe. But yet so cleverly were the channels of the GPU-

Gulag organized that the cities would have noticed nothing had they not been stricken by a strange three-year famine—a famine that came about without drought and without war.

This wave was also distinct from all those which preceded it because no one fussed about with taking the head of the family first and then working out what to do with the rest of the family. On the contrary, in this wave they burned out whole nests, whole families, from the start; and they watched jealously to be sure that none of the children—fourteen, ten, even six years old—got away: to the last scrapings, all had to go down the same road, to the same common destruction. (This was the *first* such experiment—at least in modern history. It was subsequently repeated by Hitler with the Jews, and again by Stalin with nationalities which were disloyal to him or suspected by him.)

This wave included only pathetically few of those *kulaks* for whom it was named, in order to draw the wool over people's eyes. In Russian a *kulak* is a miserly, dishonest rural trader who grows rich not by his own labor but through someone else's, through usury and operating as a middleman. In every locality even before the Revolution such kulaks could be numbered on one's fingers. And the Revolution totally destroyed their basis of activity. Subsequently, after 1917, by a transfer of meaning, the name *kulak* began to be applied (in official and propaganda literature, whence it moved into general usage) to all those who in any way hired workers, even if it was only when they were temporarily short of working hands in their own families. But we must keep in mind that after the Revolution it was impossible to pay less than a fair wage for all such labor—the Committees of the Poor and the village soviets looked after the interests of landless laborers. Just let somebody try to swindle a landless laborer! To this very day, in fact, the hiring of labor at a fair wage is permitted in the Soviet Union.

But the inflation of this scathing term *kulak* proceeded relentlessly, and by 1930 *all strong peasants in general* were being so called—all peasants strong in management, strong in work, or even strong merely in convictions. The term *kulak* was used to smash the *strength* of the peasantry. Let us remember, let us open our eyes: only a dozen years had passed since the great Decree on the Land—that very decree without which the peasants would

have refused to follow the Bolsheviks and without which the October Revolution would have failed. The land was allocated in accordance with the number of "mouths" per family, equally. It had been only nine years since the men of the peasantry had returned from the Red Army and rushed onto the land they had wrested for themselves. Then suddenly there were kulaks and there were poor peasants. How could that be? Sometimes it was the result of differences in initial stock and equipment; sometimes it may have resulted from luck in the mixture of the family. But wasn't it most often a matter of hard work and persistence? And now these peasants, whose breadgrain had fed Russia in 1928, were hastily uprooted by local good-for-nothings and city people sent in from outside. Like raging beasts, abandoning every concept of "humanity," abandoning all humane principles which had evolved through the millennia, they began to round up the very best farmers and their families, and to drive them, stripped of their possessions, naked, into the northern wastes, into the tundra and the taiga.

Such a mass movement could not help but develop subsequent ramifications. It became necessary to rid the villages also of those peasants who had merely manifested an aversion to joining the collective farms, or an absence of inclination for the collective life, which they had never seen with their own eyes, about which they knew nothing, and which they suspected (we now know how well founded their suspicions were) would mean a life of forced labor and famine under the leadership of loafers. Then it was also necessary to get rid of those peasants, some of them not at all prosperous, who, because of their daring, their physical strength, their determination, their outspokenness at meetings, and their love of justice, were favorites with their fellow villagers and by virtue of their independence were therefore dangerous to the leadership of the collective farm.[25] Beyond this, in every village there were people who in one way or another had *personally* gotten in the way of the local *activists*. This was the perfect time to settle accounts with them of jealousy, envy, insult. A new word was needed for all these new victims as a class—and it was born. By this time it had no "social" or "economic" content whatsoever, but it had a marvelous sound: *podkulachnik—"a person aiding*

25. This kind of peasant and his fate were portrayed immortally in the character of Stepan Chausov in S. Zalygin's novel.

the kulaks." In other words, I consider you an accomplice of the enemy. And that finishes you! The most tattered landless laborer in the countryside could quite easily be labeled a *podkulachnik.*[26]

And so it was that these two terms embraced everything that constituted the essence of the village, its energy, its keenness of wit, its love of hard work, its resistance, and its conscience. They were torn up by the roots—and collectivization was accomplished.

But new waves rolled from the collectivized villages: one of them was a wave of agricultural *wreckers.* Everywhere they began to discover *wrecker* agronomists who up until that year had worked honestly all their lives but who now purposely sowed weeds in Russian fields (on the instructions, of course, of the Moscow institute, which had now been totally exposed; indeed, there were those same 200,000 unarrested members of the Working Peasants Party, the TKP!). Certain agronomists failed to put into effect the profound instructions of Lysenko—and in one such wave, in 1931, Lorkh, the so-called "king" of the potato, was sent to Kazakhstan. Others carried out the Lysenko directives too precisely and thus exposed their absurdity. (In 1934 Pskov agronomists sowed flax on the snow—exactly as Lysenko had ordered. The seeds swelled up, grew moldy, and died. The big fields lay empty for a year. Lysenko could not say that the snow was a kulak or that he himself was an ass. He accused the agronomists of being kulaks and of distorting his technology. And the agronomists went off to Siberia.) Beyond all this, in almost every Machine and Tractor Station wrecking in the repairing of tractors was discovered—and that is how the failures of the first collective farm years were explained!

There was a wave "for harvest losses" (losses in comparison with the arbitrary harvest figures announced the preceding spring by the "Commission for Determination of the Harvest").

There was a wave "for failure to fulfill obligations undertaken for delivery to the state of breadgrains"—the District Party Committee had undertaken the obligation, and the collective farm had not fulfilled it: go to prison!

There was a wave for *snipping ears,* the nighttime snipping of individual ears of grain in the field—a totally new type of

26. I remember very well that in our youth this term seemed quite logical; there was nothing in the least unclear about it.

agricultural activity, a new type of harvesting! The wave of those caught doing this was not small—it included many tens of thousands of peasants, many of them not even adults but boys, girls, and small children whose elders had sent them out at night to *snip*, because they had no hope of receiving anything from the collective farm for their daytime labor. For this bitter and not very productive occupation (an extreme of poverty to which the peasants had not been driven even in serfdom) the courts handed out a full measure: *ten* years for what ranked as an especially dangerous theft of socialist property under the notorious law of August 7, 1932—which in prisoners' lingo was known simply as *the law of Seven-eighths.*

This law of "Seven-eighths" produced another big, separate wave from the construction projects of the First and Second Five-Year Plans, from transport, trade, and industry. Big thefts were turned over to the NKVD. This wave must further be kept in mind as one that kept on flowing steadily for the next fifteen years, until 1947, especially during the war years. (Then in 1947 the original law was expanded and made more harsh.)

Now at last we can catch our breath! Now at last all the mass waves are coming to an end! Comrade Molotov said on May 17, 1933: "We do not see our task as being mass repressions." Whew! At last! Begone, nighttime fears! But what's that dog howling out there? Go get 'em. Go get 'em.

And here we are! The *Kirov* wave from Leningrad has begun. While it lasted the tension was acknowledged to be so great that special staffs of the NKVD were set up in each and every District Executive Committee of the city and an "accelerated" judicial procedure was introduced. (Even earlier, it had not been famous for being slow.) And there was no right of appeal. (There had been no appeal earlier.) It is also believed that one-quarter of Leningrad was purged—*cleaned out*—in 1934–1935. Let this estimate be disproved by those who have the exact statistics and are willing to publish them. (To be sure, this wave took in much more than Leningrad alone. It had a substantial impact on the rest of the country in a form that was consistent though chaotic: the firing from the civil service of all those still left there whose fathers had been priests, all former noblewomen, and all persons having relatives abroad.)

Among such lashing waves as this, certain modest, changeless

wavelets always got lost; they were little heard of, but they, too, kept flowing on and on:

- There were Schutzbündlers who had lost the class battles in Vienna and had come to the Fatherland of the world proletariat for refuge.
- There were Esperantists—a harmful group which Stalin undertook to smoke out during the years when Hitler was doing the same thing.
- There were the unliquidated remnants of the Free Philosophic Society—illegal philosophical circles.
- There were teachers who disagreed with the advanced laboratory-team system of instruction. (In 1933, for instance, Natalya Ivanovna Bugayenko was arrested by the Rostov GPU —but in the third month of her interrogation, a government decree suddenly announced that the system was a faulty one. And she was let go.)
- There were employees of the Political Red Cross, which, through the efforts of Yekaterina Peshkova, was still defending its existence.
- There were mountain tribes of the North Caucasus who were arrested for their 1935 revolt. And non-Russian nationalities kept rolling in from one area, then another. (On the Volga Canal construction site newspapers were published in four national languages: Tatar, Turkish, Uzbek, and Kazakh. And, of course, there were readers to read them!)
- There were once again believers, who this time were unwilling to work on Sundays. (They had introduced the five- and the six-day week.) And there were collective farmers sent up for sabotage because they refused to work on religious feast days, as had been their custom in the era of individual farms.
- And, always, there were those who refused to become NKVD informers. (Among them were priests who refused to violate the secrecy of the confessional, for the *Organs* had very quickly discovered how useful it was to learn the content of confessions—the only use they found for religion.)
- And members of non-Orthodox sects were arrested on an ever-wider scale.
- And the Big Solitaire game with the socialists went on and on.

And last of all there was a category I have not yet named, a wave that was continually flowing: *Section 10*, also known as KRA (Counter-Revolutionary Agitation) and also known as ASA (Anti-Soviet Agitation). The wave of Section 10 was perhaps the most constant of all. It never stopped, and whenever there was another big wave, as, for instance, in 1937, 1945, and 1949, its waters became particularly swollen.[27]

■

Paradoxically enough, every act of the all-penetrating, eternally wakeful *Organs*, over a span of many years, was based solely on *one* article of the 140 articles of the nongeneral division of the Criminal Code of 1926. One can find more epithets in praise of this article than Turgenev once assembled to praise the Russian language, or Nekrasov to praise Mother Russia: great, powerful, abundant, highly ramified, multiform, wide-sweeping 58, which summed up the world not so much through the exact terms of its sections as in their extended dialectical interpretation.

Who among us has not experienced its all-encompassing embrace? In all truth, there is no step, thought, action, or lack of action under the heavens which could not be punished by the heavy hand of Article 58.

The article itself could not be worded in such broad terms, but it proved possible to interpret it this broadly.

Article 58 was not in that division of the Code dealing with political crimes; and nowhere was it categorized as "political." No. It was included, with crimes against public order and organized gangsterism, in a division of "crimes against the state." Thus the Criminal Code starts off by refusing to recognize anyone under its jurisdiction as a political offender. All are simply criminals.

Article 58 consisted of fourteen sections.

In Section 1 we learn that any action (and, according to

27. This particular unremitting wave grabbed up anyone at all at any moment. But when it came to outstanding intellectuals in the thirties, they sometimes considered it cleverer to fabricate a case based on some conspicuously shameful violation (like pederasty; or, in the case of Professor Pletnev, the allegation that, left alone with a woman patient, he bit her breast. A national newspaper reports such an incident—and just try to deny it!).

Article 6 of the Criminal Code, any absence of action) directed toward the weakening of state power was considered to be counterrevolutionary.

Broadly interpreted, this turned out to include the refusal of a prisoner in camp to work when in a state of starvation and exhaustion. This was a weakening of state power. And it was punished by execution. (The execution of *malingerers* during the war.)

From 1934 on, when we were given back the term *Motherland*, subsections were inserted on *treason to the Motherland*—1a, 1b, 1c, 1d. According to these subsections, all actions directed against the military might of the U.S.S.R. were punishable by execution (1b), or by ten years' imprisonment (1a), but the lighter penalty was imposed only when mitigating circumstances were present and upon civilians only.

Broadly interpreted: when our soldiers were sentenced to only ten years for allowing themselves to be taken prisoner (action injurious to Soviet military might), this was humanitarian to the point of being illegal. According to the Stalinist code, they should all have been shot on their return home.

(Here is another example of broad interpretation. I remember well an encounter in the Butyrki in the summer of 1946. A certain Pole had been born in Lemberg when that city was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Until World War II he lived in his native city, by then located in Poland; then he went to Austria, where he entered the service, and in 1945 he was arrested there by the Russians. Since by this time Austrian Lemberg had become Ukrainian Lvov, he received a *tenner* under Article 54-1a of the Ukrainian Criminal Code: i.e., for treason to his motherland, *the Ukraine!* And at his interrogation the poor fellow couldn't prove that treason to the Ukraine had not been his purpose when he went to Vienna! And that's how he conned his way into becoming a traitor.)

One important additional broadening of the section on treason was its application "via Article 19 of the Criminal Code"—"via intent." In other words, no treason had taken place; but the interrogator envisioned an *intention* to betray—and that was enough to justify a full term, the same as for actual treason. True, Article 19 proposes that there be no

penalty for intent, but only for *preparation,* but given a dialectical reading one can understand intention as preparation. And "preparation is punished in the same way [i.e., with the same penalty] as the crime itself" (Criminal Code). In general, "we draw no distinction between *intention* and the *crime* itself, and this is an instance of the *superiority* of Soviet legislation to bourgeois legislation."[28]

Section 2 listed armed rebellion, seizure of power in the capital or in the provinces, especially for the purpose of severing any part of the U.S.S.R. through the use of force. For this the penalties ranged up to and included execution (as in *every* succeeding section).

This was expanded to mean something which could not be explicitly stated in the article itself but which revolutionary sense of justice could be counted on to suggest: it applied to every attempt of any national republic to act upon its right to leave the U.S.S.R. After all, the word "force" is not defined in terms of *whom* it applies to. Even when the entire population of a republic wants to secede, if Moscow is opposed, the attempted secession will be *forcible.* Thus, all Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and Turkestan nationalists very easily received their *tens* and their *twenty-fives* under this section.

Section 3 was "assisting in any way or by any means a foreign state at war with the U.S.S.R."

This section made it possible to condemn *any* citizen who had been in occupied territory—whether he had nailed on the heel of a German soldier's shoe or sold him a bunch of radishes. And it could be applied to any citizeness who had helped lift the fighting spirit of an enemy soldier by dancing and spending the night with him. Not everyone *was* actually sentenced under this section—because of the huge numbers who had been in occupied territory. But everyone who had been in occupied territory *could* have been sentenced under it.

Section 4 spoke about (fantastic!) aid to the international bourgeoisie.

28. A. Y. Vyshinsky (editor), *Ot Tyurem k Vospitatelnym Uchrezhdeniyam* (*From Prisons to Rehabilitative Institutions*), a collection of articles published by the Criminal Policy Institute, Moscow, Sovetskoye Zakonodatelstvo Publishing House, 1934.

To whom, one wonders, could this possibly refer? And yet, broadly interpreted, and with the help of a revolutionary conscience, it was easy to find categories: All émigrés who had left the country before 1920, i.e., several years before the Code was even written, and whom our armies came upon in Europe a quarter-century later—in 1944 and 1945—received 58-4: ten years or execution. What could they have been doing abroad other than aiding the international bourgeoisie? (In the example of the young people's musical society already cited, we have seen that the international bourgeoisie could also be aided from inside the U.S.S.R.) They were, in addition, aided by all SR's, all Mensheviks (the section was drafted with them in mind), and, subsequently, by the engineers of the State Planning Commission and the Supreme Council of the Economy.

Section 5 was inciting a foreign state to declare war against the U.S.S.R.

A chance was missed to apply this section against Stalin and his diplomatic and military circle in 1940–1941. Their blindness and insanity led to just that. Who if not they drove Russia into shameful, unheard-of defeats, incomparably worse than the defeats of Tsarist Russia in 1904 or 1915? Defeats such as Russia had never known since the thirteenth century.

Section 6 was espionage.

This section was interpreted so broadly that if one were to count up all those sentenced under it one might conclude that during Stalin's time our people supported life not by agriculture or industry, but only by espionage on behalf of foreigners, and by living on subsidies from foreign intelligence services. Espionage was very convenient in its simplicity, comprehensible both to an undeveloped criminal and to a learned jurist, to a journalist and to public opinion.[29]

The breadth of interpretation of Section 6 lay further in

29. And very likely spy mania was not merely the narrow-minded predilection of Stalin alone. It was very useful for everyone who possessed any privileges. It became the natural justification for increasingly widespread secrecy, the withholding of information, closed doors and security passes, fenced-off dachas and secret, restricted special shops. People had no way of penetrating the armor plate of spy mania and learning how the bureaucracy made its cozy arrangements, loafed, blundered, ate, and took its amusements.

the fact that people were sentenced not only for actual espionage but also for:

PSh—Suspicion of Espionage—or NSh—Unproven Espionage —for which they gave the whole works.

And even SVPSh—Contacts Leading to (!) Suspicion of Espionage.

In other words, let us say that an acquaintance of an acquaintance of your wife had a dress made by the same seamstress (who was, of course, an NKVD agent) used by the wife of a foreign diplomat.

These 58-6 PSh's and SVPSh's were sticky sections. They required the strict confinement and incessant supervision of those convicted (for, after all, an intelligence service might reach out its tentacles to its protégé even in a camp); also, such prisoners could be moved only under convoy—armed escort. In general, all the *lettered articles*—which were, in fact, not articles of the Code at all but frightening combinations of capital letters (and we shall encounter more of them in this chapter)—always contained a touch of the enigmatic, always remained incomprehensible, and it wasn't at all clear whether they were offshoots of Article 58 or independent and extremely dangerous. In many camps prisoners convicted under the provisions of these lettered articles were subjected to restrictions even more stringent than those of the ordinary 58's.

Section 7 applied to subversion of industry, transport, trade, and the circulation of money.

In the thirties, extensive use was made of this section to catch masses of people—under the simplified and widely understood catchword *wrecking*. In reality, everything enumerated under Section 7 was very obviously and plainly being subverted daily. So didn't someone have to be guilty of it all? For centuries the people had built and created, always honorably, always honestly, even for serf-owners and nobles. Yet no one, from the days of Ryurik on, had ever heard of *wrecking*. But now, when for the first time all the wealth had come to belong to the people, hundreds of thousands of the best sons of the people inexplicably rushed off to *wreck*. (Section 7 did not provide for wrecking in *agriculture*, but since it was impossible otherwise to explain rationally how and why the fields were choked with weeds, why harvests were falling off,

why machines were breaking down, then dialectic sensitivity brought agriculture, too, under its sway.)

Section 8 covered terror (not that terror from above for which the Soviet Criminal Code was supposed to "provide a foundation and basis in legality,"[30] but terrorism from below).

Terror was construed in a very broad sense, not simply a matter of putting bombs under governors' carriages, but, for example, smashing in the face of a personal enemy if he was an activist in the Party, the Komsomol, or the *police!*—that was already terror. The *murder* of an activist, especially, was always treated more seriously than the murder of an ordinary person (as in the Code of Hammurabi in the eighteenth century B.C.). If a husband killed his wife's lover, it was very fortunate for him if the victim turned out not to be a Party member; he would be sentenced under Article 136 as a common criminal, who was a "social ally" and didn't require an armed escort. But if the lover turned out to have been a Party member, the husband became an enemy of the people, with a 58-8 sentence.

An even more important extension of the concept was attained by interpreting Section 8 in terms of that same Article 19, i.e., intent in the sense of *preparation*, to include not only a direct threat against an activist uttered near a beer hall ("Just you wait!") but also the quick-tempered retort of a peasant woman at the market ("Oh, drop dead!"). Both qualified as TN—Terrorist Intent—and provided a basis for applying the article in all its severity.[31]

Section 9 concerned destruction or damage by explosion or arson (always with a counterrevolutionary purpose), for which the abbreviated term was "diversion"—in other words, sabotage.

The expansion of this section was based on the fact that the counterrevolutionary purpose could be discerned by the interrogator, who knew best what was going on in the criminal's mind. And every human error, failure, mistake at work or in the production process, remained unforgiven, and was therefore considered to be a case of "diversion."

But there was no section in Article 58 which was interpreted as broadly and with so ardent a revolutionary conscience as

30. *Lenin*, fifth edition, Vol. 45, p. 190.

31. This sounds like an exaggeration, a farce, but it was not I who invented that farce. I was in prison with these individuals.

Section 10. Its definition was: "Propaganda or agitation, containing an appeal for the overthrow, subverting, or weakening of the Soviet power . . . and, equally, the dissemination or preparation or possession of literary materials of similar content." For this section in *peacetime* a minimum penalty only was set (not any less! not too light!); *no upper limit* was set for the maximum penalty.

Such was the fearlessness of the great Power when confronted by the *word* of a subject.

The famous extensions of this famous section were as follows: The scope of "agitation containing an appeal" was enlarged to include a face-to-face conversation between friends or even between husband and wife, or a private letter. The word "appeal" could mean personal advice. And we say "could mean" because, in fact, *it did.*

"Subverting and weakening" the government could include any idea which did not coincide with or rise to the level of intensity of the ideas expressed in the newspaper on any particular day. After all, anything which *does not strengthen* must *weaken*: Indeed, anything which does not completely fit in, coincide, *subverts!*

> And he who sings not with us today
> is against
> us!
>
> —MAYAKOVSKY

The term "preparation of literary materials" covered every letter, note, or private diary, even when only the original document existed.

Thus happily expanded, what *thought* was there, whether merely in the mind, spoken aloud, or jotted down, which was not covered by Section 10?

Section 11 was a special one; it had no independent content of its own, but provided for an aggravating factor in any of the preceding ones: if the action was undertaken by an organization or if the criminal joined an organization.

In actual practice, the section was so broadened that no organization whatever was required. I myself experienced the subtle application of this section. *Two* of us had secretly ex-

changed thoughts—*in other words* we were the beginnings of an organization, *in other words* an organization!

Section 12 concerned itself closely with the conscience of our citizens: it dealt with the *failure to make a denunciation* of any action of the types listed. And the penalty for the mortal sin of failure to make a denunciation *carried no maximum limit!*

This section was in itself such a fantastic extension of everything else that no further extension was needed. *He knew and he did not tell* became the equivalent of "He did it himself"!

Section 13, presumably long since out of date, had to do with service in the Tsarist secret police—the Okhrana.[32] (A subsequent form of analogous service was, on the contrary, considered patriotic.)

Section 14 stipulated the penalties for "conscious failure to carry out defined duties or intentionally careless execution of same." In brief this was called "sabotage" or "economic counter-revolution"—and the penalties, of course, included execution.

It was only the interrogator who, after consulting his revolutionary sense of justice, could separate what was intentional from what was unintentional. This section was applied to peasants who failed to come across with food deliveries. It was also applied to collective farmers who failed to work the required minimum number of "labor days"; to camp prisoners who failed to complete their work norms; and, in a peculiar ricochet, after the war it came to be applied to members of Russia's organized underworld of thieves, the blatnye or blatari, for escaping from camp. In other words, by an extension, a thief's flight from camp was interpreted as subversion of the camp system rather than as a dash to freedom.

Such was the last rib of the fan of Article 58—a fan whose spread encompassed all human existence.

Now that we have completed our review of this great Article of the Criminal Code, we are less likely to be astounded further on. Wherever the law is, crime can be found.

32. There are psychological bases for suspecting I. Stalin of having been liable under this section of Article 58 also. By no means all the documents relating to this type of service survived February, 1917, to become matters of public knowledge. V. F. Dzhunkovsky a former Tsarist police director, who died in the Kolyma, declared that the hasty burning of police archives in the first days of the February Revolution was a joint effort on the part of certain self-interested revolutionaries.

■

The damascene steel of Article 58, first tried out in 1927, right after it was forged, was wetted by all the waves of the following decade, and with whistle and slash was used to the full to deal telling blows in the law's attack upon the people in 1937–1938.

Here one has to make the point that the 1937 operation was not arbitrary or accidental, but well planned well ahead of time, and that in the first half of that year many Soviet prisons were re-equipped. Cots were taken out of the cells and continuous one- or two-storied board benches or bunks were built.[33] Old prisoners claim to remember that the first blow allegedly took the form of mass arrests, striking virtually throughout the whole country on one single August night. (But, knowing our clumsiness, I don't really believe this.) In that autumn, when people were trustingly expecting a big, nationwide amnesty on the twentieth anniversary of the October Revolution, Stalin, the prankster, added unheard-of fifteen- and twenty-year prison terms to the Criminal Code.[34]

There is hardly any neëd to repeat here what has already been widely written, and will be written many times more, about 1937: that a crushing blow was dealt the upper ranks of the Party, the government, the military command, and the GPU-NKVD itself.[35] There was hardly one province of the Soviet Union in which the first secretary of the Party Committee or the Chairman of the Provincial Executive Committee survived. Stalin picked more suitable people for his purposes.

Olga Chavchavadze tells how it was in Tbilisi. In 1938 the Chairman of the City Executive Committee, his first deputy, department chiefs, their assistants, all the chief accountants, all the chief economists were arrested. New ones were appointed in their places. Two months passed, and the arrests began again: the

33. It was similarly not by chance that the "Big House" in Leningrad was finished in 1934, just in time for Kirov's asassination.

34. The twenty-five-year term was added for the thirtieth anniversary of the Revolution in 1947.

35. These days, as we observe the Chinese Cultural Revolution at the same stage—in the seventeenth year after its final victory—we can begin to consider it very likely that there exists a fundamental law of historical development. And even Stalin himself begins to seem only a blind and perfunctory executive agent.

chairman, the deputy, all eleven department chiefs, all the chief accountants, all the chief economists. The only people left at liberty were ordinary accountants, stenographers, charwomen, and messengers. . . .

In the arrest of rank-and-file members of the Party there was evidently a hidden theme not directly stated anywhere in the indictments and verdicts: that arrests should be carried out predominantly among Party members who had joined *before* 1924. This was pursued with particular rigor in Leningrad, because all of them there had signed the "platform" of the New Opposition. (And how could they have refused to sign? How could they have refused to "trust" their Leningrad Provincial Party Committee?)

Here is one vignette from those years as it actually occurred. A district Party conference was under way in Moscow Province. It was presided over by a new secretary of the District Party Committee, replacing one recently *arrested.* At the conclusion of the conference, a tribute to Comrade Stalin was called for. Of course, everyone stood up (just as everyone had leaped to his feet during the conference at every mention of his name). The small hall echoed with "stormy applause, rising to an ovation." For three minutes, four minutes, five minutes, the "stormy applause, rising to an ovation," continued. But palms were getting sore and raised arms were already aching. And the older people were panting from exhaustion. It was becoming insufferably silly even to those who really adored Stalin. However, who would dare be the *first* to stop? The secretary of the District Party Committee could have done it. He was standing on the platform, and it was he who had just called for the ovation. But he was a newcomer. He had taken the place of a man who'd been arrested. He was afraid! After all, NKVD men were standing in the hall applauding and watching to see *who* quit first! And in that obscure, small hall, unknown to the Leader, the applause went on —six, seven, eight minutes! They were done for! Their goose was cooked! They couldn't stop now till they collapsed with heart attacks! At the rear of the hall, which was crowded, they could of course cheat a bit, clap less frequently, less vigorously, not so eagerly—but up there with the presidium where everyone could see them? The director of the local paper factory, an

independent and strong-minded man, stood with the presidium. Aware of all the falsity and all the impossibility of the situation, he still kept on applauding! Nine minutes! Ten! In anguish he watched the secretary of the District Party Committee, but the latter dared not stop. Insanity! To the last man! With make-believe enthusiasm on their faces, looking at each other with faint hope, the district leaders were just going to go on and on applauding till they fell where they stood, till they were carried out of the hall on stretchers! And even then those who were left would not falter. . . . Then, after eleven minutes, the director of the paper factory assumed a businesslike expression and sat down in his seat. And, oh, a miracle took place! Where had the universal, uninhibited, indescribable enthusiasm gone? To a man, everyone else stopped dead and sat down. They had been saved! The squirrel had been smart enough to jump off his revolving wheel.

That, however, was how they discovered who the independent people were. And that was how they went about eliminating them. That same night the factory director was arrested. They easily pasted ten years on him on the pretext of something quite different. But after he had signed Form 206, the final document of the interrogation, his interrogator reminded him:

"Don't ever be the first to stop applauding!"[36]

(And just what are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to stop?)

Now that's what Darwin's natural selection is. And that's also how to grind people down with stupidity.

But today a new myth is being created. Every story of 1937 that is printed, every reminiscence that is published, relates without exception the tragedy of the Communist leaders. They have kept on assuring us, and we have unwittingly fallen for it, that the history of 1937 and 1938 consisted chiefly of the arrests of the big Communists—and virtually no one else. But out of the *millions* arrested at that time, important Party and state officials could not possibly have represented more than 10 percent. Most of the relatives standing in line with food parcels outside the Leningrad prisons were lower-class women, the sort who sold milk.

36. Told me by N. G——ko.

The composition of the hordes who were arrested in that powerful wave and lugged off, half-dead, to the Archipelago was of such fantastic diversity that anyone who wants to deduce the rationale for it scientifically will rack his brain a long time for the answer. (To the contemporaries of the purge it was still more incomprehensible.)

The real law underlying the arrests of those years was *the assignment of quotas,* the norms set, the planned allocations. Every city, every district, every military unit was assigned a specific quota of arrests to be carried out by a stipulated time. From then on everything else depended on the ingenuity of the Security operations personnel.

The former Chekist Aleksandr Kalganov recalls that a telegram arrived in Tashkent: "Send 200!" They had just finished one clean-out, and it seemed as if there was "no one else" to take. Well, true, they had just brought in about fifty more from the districts. And then they had an idea! They would reclassify as 58's all the nonpolitical offenders being held by the police. No sooner said than done. But despite that, they had still not filled the quota. At that precise moment the police reported that a gypsy band had impudently encamped on one of the city squares and asked what to do with them. Someone had another bright idea! They surrounded the encampment and raked in all the gypsy men from seventeen to sixty as 58's! They had fulfilled the plan!

This could happen another way as well: according to Chief of Police Zabolovsky, the Chekists of Ossetia were given a quota of five hundred to be shot in the Republic. They asked to have it increased, and they were permitted another 250.

Telegrams transmitting instructions of this kind were sent via ordinary channels in a very rudimentary code. In Temryuk the woman telegrapher, in holy innocence, transmitted to the NKVD switchboard the message that 240 boxes of soap were to be shipped to Krasnodar the following day. In the morning she learned about a big wave of arrests and guessed the meaning of the message! She told her girl friend what kind of telegram it was—and was promptly arrested herself.

(Was it indeed totally by chance that the code words for human beings were *a box of soap?* Or were they familiar with soap-making?)

Of course, certain patterns could be discerned.

Among those arrested were:

Our own real spies abroad. (These were often the most dedicated Comintern workers and Chekists, and among them were many attractive women. They were called back to the Motherland and arrested at the border. They were then confronted with their former Comintern chief, for example, Mirov-Korona, who confirmed that he himself had been working for one of the foreign intelligence services—which meant that his subordinates were automatically guilty too. And the more dedicated they were, the worse it was for them.)

Soviet employees of the Chinese Eastern Railroad, the KVZhD, were one and all arrested as Japanese spies, including their wives, children, and grandmothers. But we have to admit these arrests had already begun several years earlier.

Koreans from the Far East were sent into exile in Kazakhstan —the first experiment in mass arrests *on the basis of race.*

Leningrad Estonians were all arrested on the strength of having Estonian family names and charged with being anti-Communist Estonian spies.

All Latvian Riflemen and all Latvian Chekists were arrested. Yes, indeed, those very Latvians who had been the midwives of the Revolution, who just a short while before had constituted the nucleus and the pride of the Cheka! And with them were taken even those Communists of bourgeois Latvia who had been exchanged in 1921—and been freed thereby from their dreadful Latvian prison terms of two and three years. (In Leningrad, the Latvian Department of the Herzen Institute, the House of Latvian Culture, the Estonian Club, the Latvian Technicum, and the Latvian and Estonian newspapers were all closed down.)

In the midst of the general to-do, the Big Solitaire game was finally wound up. All those not yet taken were raked in. There was no longer any reason to keep it secret. The time had come to write "finis" to the whole game. So now the socialists were taken off to prison in whole "exiles" (for example, the Ufa "exile" and the Saratov "exile"), and they were all sentenced together and driven off in herds to the slaughterhouses of the Archipelago.

Nowhere was it specifically prescribed that more members of the intelligentsia should be arrested than of other groups. But

just as the intelligentsia had never been overlooked in previous waves, it was not neglected in this one. A student's denunciation (and this combination of words, "student" and "denunciation," had ceased to sound outlandish) that a certain lecturer in a higher educational institution kept citing Lenin and Marx frequently but Stalin not at all was all that was needed for the lecturer not to show up for lectures any more. And what if he *cited no one?* All Leningrad Orientalists of the middle and younger generation were *arrested.* The entire staff of the Institute of the North, except for its NKVD informers, was *arrested.* They even went after schoolteachers. In Sverdlovsk one *case* involved thirty secondary schoolteachers and the head of the Provincial Education Department, Perel.[37] One of the terrible accusations against them was that they had made arrangements to have a New Year's tree *in order to burn down the school.* And the club fell with the regularity of a pendulum on the heads of the engineers—who by this time were no longer "bourgeois" but a whole Soviet generation of engineers.

Because of an irregularity in the geological strata two mine tunnels which mine surveyor Nikolai Merkuryevich Mikov had calculated would meet failed to do so. He got Article 58-7—twenty years.

Six geologists (the Kotovich group) were sentenced to ten years under 58-7 "for intentionally concealing reserves of tin ore in underground sites in anticipation of the arrival of the Germans." (In other words, they had failed to find the deposits.)

On the heels of the main waves followed an additional, *special* wave—of *wives* and the so-called "ChS" (Members of Families). Among them were the wives of important Party leaders and also, in certain places, Leningrad, for example, the wives of all those who had been sentenced to "ten years without the right to correspond"—in other words, those who were no longer among the living. The "ChS," as a rule, all got *eights*—eight years. (Well,

37. Five of them died before trial from tortures suffered during interrogation. Twenty-four died in camps. The thirtieth, Ivan Aristaulovich Punich, returned after his release and rehabilitation. (Had he died, we would have known nothing about the thirty, just as we know nothing about millions of others.) And the many "witnesses" who testified against them are still there in Sverdlovsk today—prospering, occupying responsible positions, or living on as special pensioners. Darwinian selection!

that was still less than the dispossessed kulaks got and their children did not go to the Archipelago.)

Piles of victims! Hills of victims! A frontal assault of the NKVD on the city: In one wave, for example, G. P. Matveyeva saw not only her husband but all three of her brothers arrested, and all in *different* cases. (Of the four, three never returned.)

An electrician had a high-tension line break in his sector: 58-7—twenty years.

A Perm worker, Novikov, was accused of planning to blow up a Kama River Bridge.

In that same city of Perm, Yuzhakov was arrested during the day, and at night they came for his wife. They presented her with a list of names and demanded that she sign a confession that they had all met in her house at a Menshevik-SR meeting (of course, they had not). They promised in return to let her out to be with her three children. She signed, destroying all those listed, and, of course, she herself remained in prison.

Nadezhda Yudenich was arrested because of her family name. True, they established, after nine months, that she was not related to the White general, and they let her out (a mere trifle: during that time her mother had died of worry).

The film *Lenin in October* was shown in Staraya Russa. Someone present noticed the phrase in the film, "Palchinsky must know!" Palchinsky was defending the Winter Palace. But we have a nurse working here named Palchinskaya! Arrest her! They did arrest her. And it turned out that she actually was his wife—who had hidden in the provinces following his execution.

In 1930, as *small boys,* the three brothers Pavel, Ivan, and Stepan Borushko came to the Soviet Union from Poland to live with their parents. Now as young men they were arrested for PSh—Suspicion of Espionage—and got ten years.

A streetcar motorwoman of Krasnodar was returning on foot late at night from the car depot; on the outskirts of the city, to her misfortune, she passed some people working to free a truck that had gotten stuck. It turned out to be full of corpses—hands and legs stuck out from beneath the canvas. They wrote down her name and the next day she was arrested. The interrogator asked her what she had seen. She told him truthfully. (Darwinian selection!) Anti-Soviet Agitation—ten years.

A plumber turned off the loudspeaker in his room every time

the endless letters to Stalin were being read.[88] His next-door neighbor denounced him. (Where, oh where, is that neighbor today?) He got SOE—"Socially Dangerous Element"—eight years.

A half-literate stovemaker used to enjoy writing his name in his free time. This raised his self-esteem. There was no blank paper around, so he wrote on newspapers. His neighbors found his newspaper in the sack in the communal toilet, with pen-and-ink flourishes across the countenance of the Father and Teacher. Anti-Soviet Agitation—ten years.

Stalin and those close to him loved their portraits and splashed them all over the newspapers and issued them in millions of copies. The flies paid little heed to their sanctity, and it was a pity not to make use of the paper—and how many unfortunates got a term for that!

Arrests rolled through the streets and apartment houses like an epidemic. Just as people transmit an epidemic infection from one to another without knowing it, by such innocent means as a handshake, a breath, handing someone something, so, too, they passed on the infection of inevitable arrest by a handshake, by a breath, by a chance meeting on the street. For if you are destined to confess tomorrow that you organized an underground group to poison the city's water supply, and if today I shake hands with you on the street, that means I, too, am doomed.

Seven years earlier the city had watched while they massacred the countryside and considered it only natural. Now the countryside might have watched them massacre the city, but the countryside itself was too dark for that, and was still undergoing the finishing touches of its own slaughter.

The surveyor (!) Saunin got fifteen years for . . . cattle plague (!) in the district and for bad harvests (!) (and the entire leadership of the district was shot for the same reason).

The secretary of a District Party Committee went into the fields to speed up the plowing, and an old peasant asked him whether he *knew* that for *seven years* the collective farmers had received not one single ounce of grain in return for their "labor days"—only *straw* and very little of that. For his question the peasant got ASA—Anti-Soviet Agitation—ten years.

38. Who remembers them? They went on and on every day for hours! Stupefyingly identical! Levitan, the announcer, probably remembers them well: he used to read them in rolling tones, with great expression!

Another peasant, with six children, met a different fate. Because he had six mouths to feed he devoted himself wholeheartedly to collective farm work, and kept hoping he would get some return for his labor. And he did—they awarded him a decoration. They awarded it at a special assembly, made speeches. In his reply, the peasant got carried away. He said, "Now if I could just have a sack of flour instead of this decoration! Couldn't I somehow?" A wolflike laugh rocketed through the hall, and the newly decorated hero went off to exile, together with all six of those dependent mouths.

Should we wrap it all up and simply say that they arrested the *innocent?* But we omitted saying that the very concept of *guilt* had been repealed by the proletarian revolution and, at the beginning of the thirties, was defined as *rightist opportunism!*[39] So we can't even discuss these out-of-date concepts, guilt and innocence.

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The *reverse wave* of 1939 was an unheard-of incident in the history of the *Organs,* a blot on their record! But, in fact, this reverse wave was not large; it included about 1 to 2 percent of those who had been arrested but not yet convicted, who had not yet been sent away to far-off places and had not yet perished. It was not large, but it was put to effective use. It was like giving back one kopeck change from a ruble, but it was necessary in order to heap all the blame on that dirty Yezhov, to strengthen the newcomer, Beria, and to cause the Leader himself to shine more brightly. With this kopeck they skillfully drove the ruble right into the ground. After all, if "they had sorted things out and freed some people" (and even the newspapers wrote intrepidly about *individual* cases of persons who had been slandered), it meant that the rest of those arrested were indeed scoundrels! And those who returned kept silent. They had signed pledges not to speak out. They were mute with terror. And there were very few who knew even a little about the secrets of the Archipelago. The distinction was as before: Black Marias at night and demonstrations by day.

But for that matter they soon took that kopeck back—during

39. Vyshinsky, *op. cit.*

those same years and via those same sections of the boundless Article 58. Well, who in 1940 noticed the wave of wives arrested for *failure to renounce* their husbands? And who in Tambov remembers that during that year of peace they arrested an entire jazz orchestra playing at the "Modern" Cinema Theatre because they all turned out to be enemies of the people? And who noticed the thirty thousand Czechs who in 1939 fled from occupied Czechoslovakia to their Slavic kinfolk in the U.S.S.R.? It was impossible to guarantee that a single one of them was not a spy. They sent them all off to northern camps. (And it was out of those camps that the "Czechoslovak Corps" materialized during the war.) And was it not, indeed, in 1939 that we reached out our helping hands to the West Ukrainians and the West Byelorussians, and, in 1940, to the Baltic states and to the Moldavians? It turned out that our brothers badly needed to be purged, and from them, too, flowed waves of *social prophylaxis.* They took those who were too independent, too influential, along with those who were too well-to-do, too intelligent, too noteworthy; they took, particularly, many Poles from former Polish provinces. (It was then that ill-fated Katyn was filled up; and then, too, that in the northern camps they stockpiled fodder for the future army of Sikorski and Anders.) They arrested officers everywhere. Thus the population was shaken up, forced into silence, and left without any possible leaders of resistance. Thus it was that wisdom was instilled, that former ties and former friendships were cut off.

Finland ceded its isthmus to us with zero population. Nevertheless, the removal and resettlement of all persons with Finnish blood took place throughout Soviet Karelia and in Leningrad in 1940. We didn't notice that wavelet: we have no Finnish blood.

In the Finnish War we undertook our first experiment in convicting our war prisoners as traitors to the Motherland. The first such experiment in human history; and would you believe it?—we didn't notice!

That was the rehearsal—just at that moment the war burst upon us. And with it a massive retreat. It was essential to evacuate swiftly everyone who could be got out of the western republics that were being abandoned to the enemy. In the rush, entire military units—regiments, antiaircraft and artillery batteries—were left behind intact in Lithuania. But they still managed to get out

several thousand families of unreliable Lithuanians. (Four thousand of them were subsequently turned over to be plundered by thieves in camp at Krasnoyarsk.) From June 23 on, in Latvia and Estonia, they speeded up the arrests. But the ground was burning under them, and they were forced to leave even faster. They forgot to take whole fortresses with them, like the one at Brest, but they did not forget to shoot down political prisoners in the cells and courtyards of Lvov, Rovno, Tallinn, and many other Western prisons. In the Tartu Prison they shot 192 prisoners and threw their corpses down a well.

How can one visualize it? You know nothing. The door of your cell opens, and they shoot you. You cry out in your death agony, and there is no one to hear your cries or tell of them except the prison stones. They say, however, that there were some who weren't successfully finished off, and we may someday read a book about that too.

In the rear, the first wartime wave was for *those spreading rumors and panic.* That was the language of a special decree, outside the Code, issued in the first days of the war.[40] This was just a trial bloodletting in order to maintain a general state of tension. They gave everyone ten years for it, but it was not considered part of Article 58, and therefore those few who survived the wartime camps were amnestied in 1945.

Then there was a wave of those who *failed to turn in radio receivers* or radio parts. For one radio tube found (as a result of denunciation) they gave ten years.

Then there was the wave of *Germans*—Germans living on the Volga, colonists in the Ukraine and the North Caucasus, and all Germans in general who lived anywhere in the Soviet Union. The determining factor here was *blood,* and even heroes of the Civil War and old members of the Party who were German were sent off into exile.[41]

40. I myself almost felt the impact of that decree. I was standing in line at the bread store, when a policeman called me out and took me off for the sake of his score. If it had not been for a fortunate intervention, I might have started out in Gulag right away instead of going off to war.

41. They judged blood by family name. The design engineer Vasily Okorokov had found it inconvenient to sign his drawings with his real name. Consequently, in the thirties, when it was still legally possible, he had changed his name to Robert Shtekker. It was elegant, and he was able to work up a good-looking professional signature with it. Now he was arrested as a German—and given

In essence, the exile of the Germans was similar to the dispossession of the kulaks. But it was less harsh, since the Germans were allowed to take more of their possessions with them and were not sent off to such fatal, deadly areas. As had been the case with the kulaks, the German exile had no juridical basis. The Criminal Code in itself was one thing, and the exile of hundreds of thousands of people was something else entirely. It was the personal edict of a monarch. In addition, this was his first experiment of the sort with an entire nationality, and he found it extremely interesting from a theoretical point of view.

By the end of the summer of 1941, becoming bigger in the autumn, the wave of *the encircled* was surging in. These were the defenders of their native land, the very same warriors whom the cities had seen off to the front with bouquets and bands a few months before, who had then sustained the heaviest tank assaults of the Germans, and in the general chaos, and through no fault of their own, had spent a certain time as isolated units not in enemy imprisonment, not at all, but in temporary encirclement, and later had broken out. And instead of being given a brotherly embrace on their return, such as every other army in the world would have given them, instead of being given a chance to rest up, to visit their families, and then return to their units—they were held on suspicion, disarmed, deprived of all rights, and taken away in groups to identification points and screening centers where officers of the Special Branches started interrogating them, distrusting not only their every word but their very identity. Identification consisted of cross-questioning, confrontations, pitting the evidence of one against another. Afterward, some of those who had been encircled were restored to their former names, ranks, and responsibilities and went off to military units. Others, fewer in number at the start, constituted the first wave of *traitors of the Motherland* under 58-1b. But at first, until the standard penalty was finally determined, they got less than ten years.

That was how the active army was kept purged. But there was also an enormous inactive army in the Far East and in Mongolia,

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no chance to prove he was not. So he was exiled. "Is this your real name? What assignments were you given by the Fascist intelligence service?" Then there was that native of Tambov whose real name was Kaverznev, and who changed it to Kolbe in 1918. At what point did he share Okorokov's fate?

and it was the noble task of the Special Branches to keep that army from growing rusty. And for lack of anything to do, the heroes of Khalkhin-Gol and Khasan began to let their tongues wag, especially after they were permitted to examine the Degtyarev automatic pistols and the regimental mortars, which until then had been kept secret even from Soviet soldiers. With such weapons in their hands, it was hard for them to understand why we were retreating in the west. With all Siberia and the Urals between them and European Russia, it was not easy for them to grasp that in retreating seventy miles a day we were simply repeating the Kutuzov entrapment maneuver. Their comprehension could be helped along only by means of a *wave* from the Eastern Army. And at that point lips tightened and faith became steely.

It was obvious that a wave had also to roll in high places—of those to blame for the retreat. (After all, it was not the Great Strategist who was at fault!) It was a small wave, just half a hundred men, a *generals'* wave. They were in Moscow prisons by the summer of 1941, and in October, 1941, they were sent off on a prisoner transport. Most of the generals were from the air force; among them were Air Force Commander Smushkevich and General Ptukhin, who was known to have said: "If I had known, I would have first bombed our Dear Father, and then gone off to prison!" And there were others.

The victory outside Moscow gave rise to a new wave: guilty Muscovites. Looking at things after the event, it turned out that those Muscovites who had not run away and who had not been evacuated but had fearlessly remained in the threatened capital, which had been abandoned by the authorities, were by that very token under suspicion either of subverting governmental authority (58-10); or of staying on to await the Germans (58-1a, via 19, a wave which kept on providing fodder for the interrogators of Moscow and Leningrad right up to 1945).

It need hardly be said that 58-10, ASA—Anti-Soviet Agitation—never let up but hovered over the front and in the rear throughout the war. Sentences under 58-10 were handed out to evacuees who talked about the horrors of the retreat (it was clear from the newspapers that the retreat was proceeding according to plan); to those in the rear who were guilty of the slanderous rumor that rations were meager; to those at the front who were guilty of the slanderous rumor that the Germans had excellent

equipment; and to those everywhere who, in 1942, were guilty of the slanderous rumor that people were dying of starvation in blockaded Leningrad.

During that same year, after the disasters at Kerch (120,000 prisoners), at Kharkov (even more), and in the course of the big southern retreat to the Caucasus and the Volga, another very important wave of officers and soldiers was pumped through—those who refused to stand to the death and who retreated without permission, the men whom, in the words of Stalin's immortal Order No. 227, the Motherland could not forgive for the shame they had caused her. This wave, however, never reached Gulag: after accelerated processing by divisional tribunals, it was, to a man, herded into punishment battalions, and was soaked up in the red sand of advanced positions, leaving not a trace. Thus was cemented the foundation of the Stalingrad victory, but it has found no place in the usual Russian history and exists only in the private history of the sewage system.

(Incidentally, we are here trying to identify only those waves which came into Gulag from outside. There was, after all, an incessant internal recirculation from reservoir to reservoir, through the system of so-called *sentencing in camp*, which was particularly rampant during the war years. But we are not considering those in this chapter.)

Conscientiousness requires that we recall also the reverse waves of wartime: the previously mentioned Czechs and Poles who were released; as well as criminals released for service at the front.

From 1943 on, when the war turned in our favor, there began the multimillion wave from the occupied territories and from Europe, which got larger every year up to 1946. Its two main divisions were:

- Civilians who had lived under the Germans or among Germans—hung with a *tenner* under the letter "a": 58-1a.
- Military personnel who had been POW's—who were nailed with a *tenner* under the letter "b": 58-1b.

Everyone living under the occupation wanted, of course, to survive, and therefore could not remain with *hands folded*, and thereby theoretically earned, along with his daily bread, a future sentence—if not for treason to the Motherland, then at least for

aiding and abetting the enemy. However, in actual practice, it was enough to note in the passport serial number that a person had been in occupied territory. To arrest all such persons would have been, from the economic point of view, irrational, because it would have depopulated such enormous areas. All that was required in order to heighten the general consciousness was to arrest a certain percentage—of those guilty, those half-guilty, those quarter-guilty, and those who had hung out their footcloths to dry on the same branch as the Germans.

After all, even one percent of just one million fills up a dozen full-blooded camps.

And dismiss the thought that honorable participation in an underground anti-German organization would surely protect one from being arrested in this wave. More than one case proved this. For instance, there was the Kiev Komsomol member whom the underground organization sent to serve in the Kiev police during the German occupation in order to obtain inside information. The boy kept the Komsomol honestly informed about everything, but when our forces arrived on the scene, he got his *tenner* because he couldn't, while serving in the police, fail to acquire some of the enemy's spirit or to carry out some enemy orders.

Those who were in Europe got the stiffest punishments of all, even though they went there as conscripted German slaves. That was because they had seen something of European life and could talk about it. And their stories, which made unpleasant listening for us (except, of course, for the travel notes of sensible writers), were especially unpleasant during the postwar years of ruin and disorganization; not everyone, after all, was able to report that things in Europe were hopelessly bad and that it was absolutely impossible to live there.

That also was the reason why they sentenced the majority of *war prisoners* (it was not simply because they had allowed themselves to be captured), particularly those POW's who had seen a little more of the West than a German death camp.[42] This was

42. That was not such a clear-cut decision at the start. Even in 1943 there were certain separate waves which were like no others—like the so-called "Africans," who bore this nickname for a long time at the Vorkuta construction projects. These were Russian war prisoners of the Germans, who had been taken prisoner a second time when the Americans captured them from Rommel's army in Africa (the "Hiwi"). In 1943 they were sent in Studebakers, through Egypt, Iraq, and Iran, to their Motherland. And on a desert gulf of the

obvious from the fact that *interned persons* were sentenced as severely as POW's. For example, during the first days of the war one of our destroyers went aground on Swedish territory. Its crew proceeded to live freely in Sweden during all the rest of the war, and in such comfort and plenty as they had never experienced before and would never experience again. The U.S.S.R. retreated, attacked, starved and died, while those scoundrels stuffed their *neutral* mugs. After the war Sweden returned them to us along with the destroyer. Their treason to the Motherland was indubitable—but somehow the case didn't get off the ground. They let them go their different ways and then pasted them with Anti-Soviet Agitation for their lovely stories in praise of freedom and good eating in capitalist Sweden. (This was the Kadenko group.)[43]

Caspian, they were immediately put behind barbed wire. The police who received them ripped off their military insignia and liberated them of all things the Americans had given them (keeping them for themselves, of course, not turning them over to the state); then they sent them off to Vorkuta to await special orders, without (due to inexperience) sentencing them to a specific term under any article of the Code. These "Africans" lived in Vorkuta in a betwixt-and-between condition. They were not under guard, but they were given no passes, and without passes they could not take so much as one step in Vorkuta. They were paid wages at the same rate as free workers, but they were treated like prisoners. And the special orders never did come. They were forgotten men.

43. What happened to this group later makes an anecdote. In camp they kept their mouths shut about Sweden, fearing they'd get a second term. But people in Sweden somehow found out about their fate and published slanderous reports in the press. By that time the boys were scattered far and near among various camps. Suddenly, on the strength of special orders, they were all yanked out and taken to the Kresty Prison in Leningrad. There they were fed for two months as though for slaughter and allowed to let their hair grow. Then they were dressed with modest elegance, rehearsed on what to say and to whom, and warned that any bastard who dared to squeak out of turn would get a bullet in his skull—and they were led off to a press conference for selected foreign journalists and some others who had known the entire crew in Sweden. The former internees bore themselves cheerfully described where they were living, studying, and working, and expressed their indignation at the bourgeois slander they had *read* about not long before in the Western press (after all, Western papers are sold in the Soviet Union at every corner newsstand!). And so they had written to one another and decided to gather in Leningrad. (Their travel expenses didn't bother them in the least.) Their fresh, shiny appearance completely gave the lie to the newspaper canard. The discredited journalists went off to write their apologies. It was wholly inconceivable to the Western imagination that there could be any other explanation. And the men who had been the subjects of the interview were taken off to a bath, had their hair cut off again, were dressed in their former rags, and sent back to the same camps. But because they had conducted themselves properly, none of them was given a second term.

Within the over-all wave of those from formerly occupied areas, there followed, one after another, the quick and compact waves of the nationalities which had transgressed:

- In 1943, the Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingush, and Balkars.
- In 1944, the Crimean Tatars.

They would not have been pushed out into eternal exile so energetically and swiftly had it not been that regular army units and military trucks were assigned to help the *Organs*. The military units gallantly surrounded the auls, or settlements, and, within twenty-four hours, with the speed of a parachute attack, those who had nested there for centuries past found themselves removed to railroad stations, loaded by the trainload, and rushed off to Siberia, Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and the Russian North. Within one day their land and their property had been turned over to their "heirs."

What had happened to the Germans at the beginning of the war now happened to these nationalities: they were exiled solely on the basis of *blood*. There was no filling out of questionnaires; Party members, Heroes of Labor, and heroes of the still-unfinished war were all sent along with the rest.

During the last years of the war, of course, there was a wave of German *war criminals* who were selected from the POW camps and transferred by court verdict to the jurisdiction of Gulag.

In 1945, even though the war with Japan didn't last three weeks, great numbers of Japanese war prisoners were raked in for urgent construction projects in Siberia and Central Asia, and the same process of selecting *war criminals* for Gulag was carried out among them.[44]

At the end of 1944, when our army entered the Balkans, and especially in 1945, when it reached into Central Europe, a wave of Russian *émigrés* flowed through the channels of Gulag. Most were old men, who had left at the time of the Revolution, but there were also young people, who had grown up outside Russia. They usually dragged off the menfolk and left the women and

44. Without knowing the details, I am nevertheless convinced that a great many of these Japanese could not have been sentenced legitimately. It was an act of revenge, as well as a means of holding onto manpower for as long a period as possible.

children where they were. It is true that they did not take everyone, but they took all those who, in the course of twenty-five years, had expressed even the mildest political views, or who had expressed them earlier, during the Revolution. They did not touch those who had lived a purely vegetable existence. The main waves came from Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia; there were fewer from Austria and Germany. In the other countries of Eastern Europe, there were hardly any Russians.

As if in response to 1945, a wave of émigrés poured from Manchuria too. (Some of them were not arrested immediately. Entire families were encouraged to return to the homeland as free persons, but once back in Russia they were separated and sent into exile or taken to prison.)

All during 1945 and 1946 a big wave of genuine, at-long-last, enemies of the Soviet government flowed into the Archipelago. (These were the Vlasov men, the Krasnov Cossacks, and Moslems from the national units created under Hitler.) Some of them had acted out of conviction; others had been merely involuntary participants.

Along with them were seized *not less than one million fugitives from the Soviet government*—civilians of all ages and of both sexes who had been fortunate enough to find shelter on Allied territory, but who in 1946–1947 were perfidiously returned by Allied authorities into Soviet hands.[45]

45. It is surprising that in the West, where political secrets cannot be kept long, since they inevitably come out in print or are disclosed, the secret of *this* particular act of betrayal has been very well and carefully kept by the British and American governments. This is truly the last secret, or one of the last, of the Second World War. Having often encountered these people in camps, I was unable to believe for a whole quarter-century that the public in the West knew *nothing* of this action of the Western governments, this massive handing over of ordinary Russian people to retribution and death. Not until 1973—in the *Sunday Oklahoman* of January 21—was an article by Julius Epstein published. And I am here going to be so bold as to express gratitude on behalf of the mass of those who perished and those few left alive. One random little document was published from the many volumes of the hitherto concealed case history of forced repatriation to the Soviet Union. "After having remained unmolested in British hands for two years, they had allowed themselves to be lulled into a false sense of security and they were therefore taken completely by surprise. . . . They did not realize they were being repatriated. . . . They were mainly simple peasants with bitter personal grievances against the Bolsheviks." The English authorities gave them the treatment "reserved in the case of every other nation for war criminals alone: that of being handed over against their will to captors who, incidentally, were not expected to give them a fair trial." They were all sent to destruction on the Archipelago. (Author's note, dated 1973.)

A certain number of *Poles*, members of the Home Army, followers of Mikolajczyk, arrived in Gulag in 1945 via our prisons.

There were a certain number of *Rumanians* and *Hungarians.*

At war's end and for many years after, there flowed uninterruptedly an abundant wave of Ukrainian nationalists (the "Banderovtsy").

Against the background of this enormous postwar displacement of millions, few paid much attention to such small waves as:

- *Foreigners' girl friends* (in 1946–1947)—in other words, Soviet girls who went out with foreigners. They sentenced these girls under Article 7-35—SOE—Socially Dangerous Element.
- *Spanish children*—the same children who had been taken from their homeland during the Spanish Civil War, but who were adults by the end of World War II. Raised in our boarding schools, they nonetheless fitted very poorly into our life. Many longed to go "home." They, too, were given 7-35—SOE—Socially Dangerous Element. And those who were particularly stubborn got 58-6—espionage on behalf of America.

(In fairness we must not forget the brief reverse wave of priests in 1947. Yes, a miracle! For the first time in thirty years they freed priests! They didn't actually go about seeking them out in camps, but whenever a priest was known to people in freedom, and whenever a name and exact location could be provided, the individual priests in question were sent out to freedom in order to strengthen the church, which at that time was being revived.)

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We have to remind our readers once again that this chapter does not attempt by any means to list *all* the waves which fertilized Gulag—but only those which had a political coloration. And just as, in a course in physiology, after a detailed description of the circulation of the blood, one can begin over again and describe in detail the lymphatic system, one could begin again and describe the waves of *nonpolitical offenders* and *habitual criminals* from 1918 to 1953. And this description, too, would run long. It would bring to light many famous decrees, now in part for-

gotten (even though they have never been repealed), which supplied abundant human material for the insatiable Archipelago. One was the Decree on Absenteeism. One was the Decree on Production of Bad Quality Goods. Another was on samogon [moonshine] distilling. Its peak period was 1922—but arrests for this were constant throughout the twenties. And the Decree on the Punishment of Collective Farmers for Failure to Fulfill the Obligatory Norm of Labor Days. And the Decree on the Introduction of Military Discipline on Railroads, issued in April, 1943—not at the beginning of the war, but when it had already taken a turn for the better.

In accordance with the ancient Petrine tradition, these decrees always put in an appearance as the most important element in all our legislation, but without any comprehension of or reference to the whole of our previous legislation. Learned jurists were supposed to coordinate the branches of the law, but they were not particularly energetic at it, nor particularly successful either.

This steady pulse of decrees led to a curious national pattern of violations and crimes. One could easily recognize that neither burglary, nor murder, nor samogon distilling, nor rape ever seemed to occur at random intervals or in random places throughout the country as a result of human weakness, lust, or failure to control one's passions. By no means! One detected, instead, a surprising unanimity and monotony in the crimes committed. The entire Soviet Union would be in a turmoil of rape alone, or murder alone, or samogon distilling alone, each in its turn—in sensitive reaction to the latest government decree. Each particular crime or violation seemed somehow to be playing into the hands of the latest decree so that it would disappear from the scene that much faster! At that precise moment, the particular crime which had just been foreseen, and for which wise new legislation had just provided stricter punishment, would explode simultaneously everywhere.

The Decree on the militarization of railroads crowded the military tribunals with the women and adolescents who did most of the work on the railroads during the war years and who, having received no barracks training beforehand, were those mostly involved in delays and violations. The Decree on Failure to Fulfill the Obligatory Norm of Labor Days greatly simplified the

procedure for removing from the scene those collective farmers who were dissatisfied with receiving for their labor mere "labor day" *points* in the farm account books and wanted produce instead. Whereas previously their cases had required a trial, based on the article of the Code relating to "economic counterrevolution," now it was enough to produce a collective farm decree confirmed by the District Executive Committee. And even then these collective farmers, although they were sent into exile, must have been relieved to know that they were not listed as enemies of the people. The obligatory norm of "labor days" was different in different areas, the easiest of all being among the peoples of the Caucasus—seventy-five "labor days" a year; but despite that, many of them were also sent off to Krasnoyarsk Province for eight years.

As we have said, we are not going to go into a lengthy and lavish examination of the waves of nonpolitical offenders and common criminals. But, having reached 1947, we cannot remain silent about one of the most grandiose of Stalin's decrees. We have already mentioned the famous law of "Seven-Eight" or "Seven-eighths," on the basis of which they arrested people right and left—for taking a stalk of grain, a cucumber, two small potatoes, a chip of wood, a spool of thread—all of whom got ten years.[46]

But the requirements of the times, as Stalin understood them, had changed, and the *tenner*, which had seemed adequate on the eve of a terrible war, seemed now, in the wake of a world-wide historical victory, inadequate. And so again, in complete disregard of the Code, and totally overlooking the fact that many different articles and decrees on the subject of thefts and robberies already existed, on June 4, 1947, a decree was issued which outdid them all. It was instantly christened "Four-sixths" by the undismayed prisoners.

The advantages of the new decree lay first of all in its newness. From the very moment it appeared, a torrent of the crimes it specified would be bound to burst forth, thereby providing an abundant wave of newly sentenced prisoners. But it offered an

46. In the actual documents of the "spool of thread" case, they wrote down "200 meters of sewing material." The fact remains that they were ashamed to write "a spool of thread."

even greater advantage in prison terms. If a young girl sent into the fields to get a few ears of grain took along two friends for company ("an organized gang") or some twelve-year-old youngsters went after cucumbers or apples, they were liable to get *twenty* years in camp. In factories, the maximum sentence was raised to *twenty-five years.* (This sentence, called the *quarter*, had been introduced a few days earlier to replace the death penalty, which had been abolished as a humane act.)[47]

And then, at long last, an ancient shortcoming of the law was corrected. Previously the only failure to make a denunciation which qualified as a crime against the state had been in connection with political offenses. But now simple failure to report the theft of state or collective farm property earned three years of camp or seven years of exile.

In the years immediately following this decree, whole "divisions" from the countryside and the cities were sent off to cultivate the islands of Gulag in place of the natives who had died off there. True, these waves were processed through the police and the ordinary courts, and did not clog the channels of State Security, which, even without them, were overstrained in the postwar years.

Stalin's new line, suggesting that it was necessary, in the wake of the victory over fascism, *to jail* more people more energetically and for longer terms than ever before, had immediate repercussions, of course, on political prisoners.

The year 1948–1949, notable throughout Soviet public life for intensified persecution and vigilance, was marked by one tragicomedy hitherto unheard of even in Stalinist antijustice—that of the *repeaters.*

That is what, in the language of Gulag, they called those still undestroyed unfortunates of 1937 vintage, who had succeeded in surviving ten impossible, unendurable years, and who in 1947–1948, had timidly stepped forth onto the land of *freedom* . . . worn out, broken in health, but hoping to live out in peace what little of their lives remained. But some sort of savage fantasy (or stubborn malice, or unsated vengeance) pushed the Victorious

47. And the death penalty itself was kept veiled for a brief period only; the veil was removed, amid a show of bared fangs, two and a half years later —in January, 1950.

Generalissimo into issuing the order to arrest all those cripples over again, without any new charges! It was even disadvantageous, both economically and politically, to clog the meat grinder with its own refuse. But Stalin issued the order anyway. Here was a case in which a historical personality simply behaved capriciously toward historical necessity.

And so it was necessary to *take* all of them though they had hardly had a chance to attach themselves to new places or new families. They were rounded up with much the same weary indolence they themselves now returned with. They knew beforehand the whole way of the cross ahead. They did not ask "What for?" And they did not say to their families: "I'll be back." They put on their shabbiest rags, poured some makhorka into their camp tobacco pouches, and went off to sign the deposition. (Only one question: "Are you the one who was in prison?" "Yes." "Take *ten* more.")

At this point the Autocrat decided it wasn't enough to arrest just those who had survived since 1937! What about the *children* of his sworn enemies? They, too, must be imprisoned! They were growing up, and they might have notions of vengeance. (He may have had a heavy dinner and had a nightmare about those children.) They went through the lists, looked around, and arrested children—but not very many. They arrested the children of the purged army commanders, but not all the children of Trotskyites. And so the wave of the *vengeful children* came into being. (Among such children were seventeen-year-old Lena Kosaryeva and thirty-five-year-old Yelena Rakovskaya.)

By 1948, after the great European displacement, Stalin had succeeded once again in tightly barricading himself in and pulling the ceiling down closer to him: in this reduced space he had recreated the tension of 1937.

And so in 1948, 1949, and 1950 there flowed past:

- Alleged spies (ten years earlier they had been German and Japanese, now they were Anglo-American).
- Believers (this wave non-Orthodox for the most part).
- Those geneticists and plant breeders, disciples of the late Vavilov and of Mendel, who had not previously been arrested.
- Just plain ordinary thinking people (and students, with particular severity) who had not been sufficiently scared away

from the West. It was fashionable to charge them with:

- VAT—Praise of American Technology;
- VAD—Praise of American Democracy; and
- PZ—Toadyism Toward the West.

These waves were not unlike those of 1937, but the *sentences* were different. The standard sentence was no longer the patriarchal *ten-ruble bill*, but the new Stalinist *twenty-five*. By now the *tenner* was for *juveniles*.

There was a good-sized wave from the new Decree on Revealing State Secrets. (State secrets included such things as: the district harvest; any figure on epidemics; the type of goods produced by any workshop or mini-factory; mention of a civil airport, municipal transport routes, or the family name of any prisoner imprisoned in any camp.) For violations of this decree they gave fifteen years.

The waves of nationalities were not forgotten either. The Ukrainian nationalists, the "Banderovtsy," taken in the heat of struggle from the forests where they fought, kept flowing all this time. Simultaneously, all West Ukrainian country people received *tenners* and *fivers* in camps and exile—presumably for having had connections with the partisans: someone had let them spend the night; someone had once fed them; someone had not reported them. For about a year, starting in 1950, a wave of *wives* of Banderovtsy was under way. They gave them each ten years for failure to make a denunciation—so as to finish off their husbands faster.

By this time resistance in Lithuania and Estonia had already come to an end. But in 1949 new waves of new "social prophylaxis" to assure collectivization kept coming. They took whole trainloads of city dwellers and peasants from the three Baltic republics into Siberian exile. (The historical rhythm was disrupted in these republics: they were forced to recapitulate in brief, limited periods the more extended experience of the rest of the country.)

In 1948 one more nationalist wave went into exile—that of the *Greeks* who inhabited the areas around the Sea of Azov, the Kuban, and Sukhumi. They had done nothing to offend the Father during the war, but now he avenged himself on them for his failure in Greece, or so it seemed. This wave, too, was evi-

dently the fruit of his personal insanity. The majority of the Greeks ended up in Central Asian exile; those who voiced their discontent were thrown into political prisons.

Around 1950, to avenge the same lost war, or perhaps just to balance those already in exile, the Greek rebels from Markos' army, who had been turned over to us by Bulgaria, were themselves shipped off to the Archipelago.

During the last years of Stalin's life, a wave of *Jews* became noticeable. (From 1950 on they were hauled in little by little as *cosmopolites*. And that was why the *doctors'* case was cooked up. It would appear that Stalin intended to arrange a great massacre of the Jews.)[48]

But this became the first plan of his life to fail. God told him —apparently with the help of human hands—to depart from his rib cage.

The preceding exposition should have made it clear, one would think, that in the removal of millions and in the populating of Gulag, consistent, cold-blooded planning and never-weakening persistence were at work.

That we never did have any *empty* prisons, merely prisons which were full or prisons which were very, very overcrowded.

And that while you occupied yourself to your heart's content studying the safe secrets of the atomic nucleus, researching the influence of Heidegger on Sartre, or collecting Picasso reproductions; while you rode off in your railroad sleeping compartment to vacation resorts, or finished building your country house near Moscow—the Black Marias rolled incessantly through the streets and the gaybisty—the State Security men—knocked at doors and rang doorbells.

And I think this exposition proves that the *Organs* always earned their pay.

48. It has always been impossible to learn the truth about anything in our country—now, and always, and from the beginning. But, according to Moscow rumors, Stalin's plan was this: At the beginning of March the "doctor-murderers" were to be hanged on Red Square. The aroused patriots, spurred on, naturally, by instructors, were to rush into an anti-Jewish pogrom. At this point the government—and here Stalin's character can be divined, can it not? —would intervene generously to save the Jews from the wrath of the people, and that same night would remove them from Moscow to the Far East and Siberia—where barracks had already been prepared for them.

Chapter 3

■

The Interrogation

If the intellectuals in the plays of Chekhov who spent all their time guessing what would happen in twenty, thirty, or forty years had been told that in forty years interrogation by torture would be practiced in Russia; that prisoners would have their skulls squeezed within iron rings;[1] that a human being would be lowered into an acid bath;[2] that they would be trussed up naked to be bitten by ants and bedbugs; that a ramrod heated over a primus stove would be thrust up their anal canal (the "secret brand"); that a man's genitals would be slowly crushed beneath the toe of a jackboot; and that, in the luckiest possible circumstances, prisoners would be tortured by being kept from sleeping for a week, by thirst, and by being beaten to a bloody pulp, not one of Chekhov's plays would have gotten to its end because all the heroes would have gone off to insane asylums.

Yes, not only Chekhov's heroes, but what normal Russian at the beginning of the century, including any member of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party, could have believed, would have tolerated, such a slander against the bright future? What had been acceptable under Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich in the seventeenth century, what had already been regarded as barbarism under Peter the Great, what might have been used against ten or twenty people in all during the time of Biron in the

1. Dr. S., according to the testimony of A.P.K——va.
2. K. S. T——e.

mid-eighteenth century, what had already become totally impossible under Catherine the Great, was all being practiced during the flowering of the glorious twentieth century—in a society based on socialist principles, and at a time when airplanes were flying and the radio and talking films had already appeared—not by one scoundrel alone in one secret place only, but by tens of thousands of specially trained human beasts standing over millions of defenseless victims.

Was it only that explosion of atavism which is now evasively called "the cult of personality" that was so horrible? Or was it even more horrible that during those same years, in 1937 itself, we celebrated Pushkin's centennial? And that we shamelessly continued to stage those self-same Chekhov plays, even though the answers to them had already come in? Is it not still more dreadful that we are now being told, thirty years later, "Don't talk about it!"? If we start to recall the sufferings of millions, we are told it will distort the historical perspective! If we doggedly seek out the essence of our morality, we are told it will darken our material progress! Let's think rather about the blast furnaces, the rolling mills that were built, the canals that were dug . . . no, better not talk about the canals. . . . Then maybe about the gold of the Kolyma? No, maybe we ought not to talk about that either. . . . Well, we can talk about anything, so long as we do it adroitly, so long as we glorify it. . . .

It is really hard to see why we condemn the Inquisition. Wasn't it true that beside the autos-da-fé, magnificent services were offered the Almighty? It is hard to see why we are so down on serfdom. After all, no one forbade the peasants to work every day. And they could sing carols at Christmas too. And for Trinity Day the girls wove wreaths. . . .

■

The exceptional character which written and oral legend nowadays assigns to the year 1937 is seen in the creation of fabricated charges and tortures. But this is untrue, wrong. Throughout the years and decades, interrogations under Article 58 were *almost never* undertaken to elicit the truth, but were simply an exercise in an inevitably filthy procedure: someone who had been

free only a little while before, who was sometimes proud and always unprepared, was to be bent and pushed through a narrow pipe where his sides would be torn by iron hooks and where he could not breathe, so that he would finally pray to get to the other end. And at the other end, he would be shoved out, an already processed native of the Archipelago, already in the promised land. (The fool would keep on resisting! He even thought there was a way back out of the pipe.)

The more time that passes without anything being written about all this, the harder it becomes to assemble the scattered testimony of the survivors. But they tell us that the creation of *fabricated* cases began back in the early years of the *Organs* so their constant salutary activity might be perceived as essential. Otherwise, what with a decline in the number of enemies, the *Organs* might, in a bad hour, have been forced to *wither away*. As the case of Kosyrev makes clear,[3] the situation of the Cheka was shaky even at the beginning of 1919. Reading the newspapers of 1918, I ran into the official report of a terrible plot that had just been discovered: A group of ten people wanted to (it seems they only *wanted to!*) drag *cannon* onto the roof of an orphanage (let's see—how high was it?) and shell the Kremlin. There were *ten* of them (including, perhaps, women and youngsters), and it was not reported how many cannon there were to be—nor where the cannon were to come from. Nor what caliber they were. Nor how they were to be carried up the stairs to the attic. Nor how they were to be set up, on the steeply sloping roof, and so they wouldn't recoil when fired! How was it that the Petersburg police, when they were fighting to put down the February Revolution, took nothing heavier than a machine gun up to the roofs? Yet this fantasy, exceeding even the fabrications of 1937, was read and believed! Apparently, it will be proved to us in time that the Gumilyev case of 1921 was also fabricated.[4]

In that same year, 1921, the Ryazan Cheka fabricated a false case of a "plot" on the part of the local intelligentsia. But the protests of courageous people could still reach Moscow, and they dropped the case. That year, too, the whole Sapropelite Com-

3. Cf. Part I, Chapter 8, below.

4. A. A. Akhmatova told me she was convinced that this was so. She even gave me the name of the Chekist who cooked up the *case*—Y. Agranov, it seems.

mittee, part of the Commission on the Use of Natural Forces, was shot. Familiar enough with the attitude and the mood of Russian scientists at that time, and not being shut off from those years by a smoke screen of fanaticism, we can, indeed, figure out, even without archaeological excavations, the precise validity of that case.

Here is what Y. Doyarenko remembers about 1921: the Lubyanka reception cell for those newly arrested, with forty to fifty trestle beds, and women being brought in one after another all night long. None of them knew what she was supposed to be guilty of, and there was a feeling among them that people were being arrested for no reason at all. Only one woman in the whole cell knew why she was there—she was an SR. The first question asked by Yagoda: "Well, *what* are you here for?" In other words, you tell me, and help me cook up the case! And they say *absolutely the same thing* about the Ryazan GPU in 1930! People all felt they were being imprisoned for no reason. There was so little on which to base a charge that they accused I. D. T——v of using a false name. (And even though his name was perfectly real, they handed him three years via a Special Board—OSO—under 58-10.) Not knowing what to pick on, the interrogator asked: "What was your job?" Answer: "A planner." The interrogater: "Write me a statement that explains 'planning at the factory and how it is carried out.' After that I will let you know why you've been arrested." (He expected the explanation to provide the hook on which to hang a charge.)

Here is the way it went in the case of the Kovno Fortress in 1912: Since the fortress served no useful military purpose, it was decided to eliminate it. At that point the fortress command, thoroughly alarmed, arranged a "night attack" simply to prove its usefulness and in order to stay where they were!

The theoretical view of the suspect's *guilt* was, incidentally, quite elastic from the very beginning. In his instructions on the use of Red Terror, the Chekist M. I. Latsis wrote: "In the interrogation do not seek evidence and proof that the person accused acted in word or deed against Soviet power. The first questions should be: What is his class, what is his origin, what is his education and upbringing? [There is your Sapropelite Committee for you!] These are the questions which must determine the fate of

the accused." On November 13, 1920, Dzerzhinsky reported in a letter to the Cheka that "slanderous declarations are often given the green light" in the Cheka.

After so many decades have they not taught us that people do not return *from there?* Except for the small, brief, intentional reverse wave of 1939, one hears only the rarest, isolated stories of someone being turned loose as the result of an interrogation. And in such cases, the person was either imprisoned soon again or else he was let out so he could be kept under surveillance. That is how the tradition arose that *the Organs do not make mistakes.* Then what about those who were innocent?

In his *Dictionary of Definitions* Dal makes the following distinction: "An *inquiry* is distinguished from an *investigation* by the fact that it is carried out to determine whether there is a basis for proceeding to an *investigation.*"

On, sacred simplicity! The *Organs* have never heard of such a thing as an *inquiry!* Lists of names prepared up above, or an initial suspicion, or a denunciation by an informer, or any anonymous denunciation,[5] were all that was needed to bring about the arrest of the suspect, followed by the inevitable formal charge. The time allotted for investigation was not used to unravel the crime but, in ninety-five cases out of a hundred, to exhaust, wear down, weaken, and render helpless the defendant, so that he would want it to end at any cost.

As long ago as 1919 the chief method used by the interrogator was *a revolver on the desk.* That was how they investigated not only political but also ordinary misdemeanors and violations. At the trial of the Main Fuels Committee (1921), the accused Makhrovskaya complained that at her interrogation she had been drugged with cocaine. The prosecutor replied: "If she had declared that she had been treated rudely, that they had *threatened to shoot her, this might be just barely believable.*"[6] The frightening revolver lies there and sometimes it is aimed at you, and the interrogator doesn't tire himself out thinking up what you are

5. Article 93 of the Code of Criminal Procedure has this to say: "An anonymous declaration *can* serve as reason for beginning a criminal case"! (And there is no need to be surprised at the word "criminal" here, since all "politicals" were considered criminals, too, under the Code.)

6. N. V. Krylenko, *Za Pyat Let (1918–1922)* (*The Last Five Years [1918–1922]*), Moscow-Petrograd, GIZ, 1923, p. 401.

guilty of, but shouts: "Come on, talk! You know what about!" That was what the interrogator Khaikin demanded of Skripnikova in 1927. That was what they demanded of Vitkovsky in 1929. And twenty-five years later nothing had changed. In 1952 Anna Skripnikova was undergoing her *fifth* imprisonment, and Sivakov, Chief of the Investigative Department of the Ordzhonikidze State Security Administration, said to her: "The prison doctor reports you have a blood pressure of 240/120. That's too low, you bitch! We're going to drive it up to 340 so you'll kick the bucket, you viper, and with no black and blue marks; no beatings; no broken bones. We'll just not let you sleep." She was in her fifties at the time. And if, back in her cell, after a night spent in interrogation, she closed her eyes during the day, the jailer broke in and shouted: "Open your eyes or I'll haul you off that cot by the legs and tie you to the wall standing up."

As early as 1921 interrogations usually took place at night. At that time, too, they shone automobile lights in the prisoner's face (the Ryazan Cheka—Stelmakh). And at the Lubyanka in 1926 (according to the testimony of Berta Gandal) they made use of the hot-air heating system to fill the cell first with icy-cold and then with stinking hot air. And there was an airtight cork-lined cell in which there was no ventilation and they cooked the prisoners. The poet Klyuyev was apparently confined in such a cell and Berta Gandal also. A participant in the Yaroslavl uprising of 1918, Vasily Aleksandrovich Kasyanov, described how the heat in such a cell was turned up until your blood began to ooze through your pores. When they saw this happening through the peephole, they would put the prisoner on a stretcher and take him off to sign his confession. The "hot" and "salty" methods of the "gold" period are well known. And in Georgia in 1926 they used lighted cigarettes to burn the hands of prisoners under interrogation. In Metekhi Prison they pushed prisoners into a cesspool in the dark.

There is a very simple connection here. Once it was established that charges had to be brought at any cost and despite everything, threats, violence, tortures became inevitable. And the more fantastic the charges were, the more ferocious the interrogation had to be in order to force the required confession. Given the fact that the cases were always fabricated, violence and torture had

to accompany them. This was not peculiar to 1937 alone. It was a chronic, general practice. And that is why it seems strange today to read in the recollections of former zeks that "torture was permitted from the spring of 1938 on."[7] There were never any spiritual or moral barriers which could have held the Organs back from torture. In the early postwar years, in the *Cheka Weekly, The Red Sword,* and *Red Terror,* the admissibility of torture from a Marxist point of view was openly debated. Judging by the subsequent course of events, the answer deduced was positive, though not universally so.

It is more accurate to say that if before 1938 some kind of formal documentation was required as a preliminary to torture, as well as specific permission for each case under investigation (even though such permission was easy to obtain), then in the years 1937–1938, in view of the extraordinary situation prevailing (the specified millions of admissions to the Archipelago had to be ground through the apparatus of individual interrogation in specified, limited periods, something which had simply not happened in the mass waves of kulaks and nationalities), interrogators were allowed to use violence and torture on an unlimited basis, at their own discretion, and in accordance with the demands of their work quotas and the amount of time they were given. The types of torture used were not regulated and every kind of ingenuity was permitted, no matter what.

In 1939 such indiscriminate authorization was withdrawn, and once again written permission was required for torture, and perhaps it may not have been so easily granted. (Of course, simple threats, blackmail, deception, exhaustion through enforced sleeplessness, and punishment cells were never prohibited.) Then, from the end of the war and throughout the postwar years, certain *categories* of prisoners were established by decree for whom a broad range of torture was automatically permitted. Among these were nationalists, particularly the Ukrainians and the Lithuanians, especially in those cases where an underground organization

7. Y. Ginzburg writes that permission for "physical measures of persuasion" was given in April, 1938. V. Shalamov believes that tortures were permitted from the middle of 1938 on. The old prisoner M——ch is convinced that there was an "order to simplify the questioning and to change from psychological methods to physical methods." Ivanov-Razumnik singles out the middle of 1938 as the "period of the most cruel interrogations."

existed (or was suspected) that had to be completely uncovered, which meant obtaining the names of everyone involved from those already arrested. For example, there were about fifty Lithuanians in the group of Romualdas Skyrius, the son of Pranus. In 1945 they were charged with posting anti-Soviet leaflets. Because there weren't enough prisons in Lithuania at the time, they sent them to a camp near Velsk in Archangel Province. There some were tortured and others simply couldn't endure the double regime of work plus interrogation, with the result that all fifty, to the very last one, *confessed*. After a short time news came from Lithuania that the real culprits responsible for the leaflets had been discovered, *and none of the first group had been involved at all!* In 1950, at the Kuibyshev Transit Prison, I encountered a Ukrainian from Dnepropetrovsk who had been tortured many different ways in an effort to squeeze "contacts" and names out of him. Among the tortures to which he had been subjected was a punishment cell in which there was room only to stand. They shoved a pole inside for him to hold on to so that he could sleep —for four hours a day. After the war, they tortured Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences Levina because she and the Alliluyevs had acquaintances in common.

It would also be incorrect to ascribe to 1937 the "discovery" that the personal confession of an accused person was more important than any other kind of proof or facts. This concept had already been formulated in the twenties. And 1937 was just the year when the brilliant teaching of Vyshinsky came into its own. Incidentally, even at that time, his teaching was transmitted only to interrogators and prosecutors—for the sake of their morale and steadfastness. The rest of us only learned about it twenty years later—when it had already come into disfavor—through subordinate clauses and minor paragraphs of newspaper articles, which treated the subject as if it had long been widely known to all.

It turns out that in that terrible year Andrei Yanuaryevich (one longs to blurt out, "Jaguaryevich") Vyshinsky, availing himself of the most flexible dialectics (of a sort nowadays not permitted either Soviet citizens or electronic calculators, since to them *yes* is *yes* and *no* is *no*), pointed out in a report which became famous in certain circles that it is never possible for

mortal men to establish absolute truth, but relative truth only. He then proceeded to a further step, which jurists of the last two thousand years had not been willing to take: that the truth established by interrogation and trial could not be absolute, but only, so to speak, relative. Therefore, when we sign a sentence ordering someone to be shot we can never be *absolutely* certain, but only approximately, in view of certain hypotheses, and in a certain sense, that we are punishing a *guilty person.*[8] Thence arose the most practical conclusion: that it was useless to seek absolute evidence—for evidence is always relative—or unchallengeable witnesses—for they can say different things at different times. The proofs of guilt were *relative,* approximate, and the interrogator could find them, even when there was no evidence and no witness, without leaving his office, "basing his conclusions not only on his own intellect but also on his Party sensitivity, his *moral forces*" (in other words, the superiority of someone who has slept well, has been well fed, and has not been beaten up) "and on his *character*" (i.e., his willingness to apply cruelty!).

Of course, this formulation was much more elegant than Latsis' instructions. But the essence of both was the same.

In only one respect did Vyshinsky fail to be consistent and retreat from dialectical logic: for some reason, the executioner's *bullet* which he allowed was not relative but *absolute.* . . .

Thus it was that the conclusions of advanced Soviet jurisprudence, proceeding in a spiral, returned to barbaric or medieval standards. Like medieval torturers, our interrogators, prosecutors, and judges agreed to accept the confession of the accused as the chief proof of guilt.[9]

However, the simple-minded Middle Ages used dramatic and

8. Perhaps Vyshinsky, no less than his listeners, needed this ideological comfort at this time. When he cried out from the prosecutor's platform: "Shoot them all like mad dogs!" he, at least, who was both evil and quick of mind, understood that the accused were innocent. And in all probability he and that whale of Marxist dialectics, the defendant Bukharin, devoted themselves with all the greater passion to the dialectical elaboration of the judicial lie: for Bukharin it was too stupid and futile to die if he was altogether innocent (thus he *needed* to find his own guilt!); and for Vyshinsky it was more agreeable to see himself as a logician than as a plain downright scoundrel.

9. Compare the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States: "Nor shall [any person] be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself." *Not be compelled!* (The same thing appears in the seventeenth-century Bill of Rights.)

picturesque methods to squeeze out the desired confessions: the rack, the wheel, the bed of nails, impalement, hot coals, etc. In the twentieth century, taking advantage of our more highly developed medical knowledge and extensive prison experience (and someone seriously defended a doctoral dissertation on this theme), people came to realize that the accumulation of such impressive apparatus was superfluous and that, on a mass scale, it was also cumbersome. And in addition . . .

In addition, there was evidently one other circumstance. As always, Stalin did not pronounce that final word, and his subordinates had to guess what he wanted. Thus, like a jackal, he left himself an escape hole, so that he could, if he wanted, beat a retreat and write about "dizziness from success." After all, for the first time in human history the calculated torture of millions was being undertaken, and, even with all his strength and power, Stalin could not be absolutely sure of success. In dealing with such an enormous mass of material, the effects of the experiment might differ from those obtained from a smaller sample. An unforeseen explosion might take place, a slippage in a geological fault, or even world-wide disclosure. In any case, Stalin had to remain innocent, his sacred vestments angelically pure.

We are therefore forced to conclude that no list of tortures and torments existed in printed form for the guidance of interrogators! Instead, all that was required was for every Interrogation Department to supply the tribunal within a specified period with a stipulated number of rabbits who had confessed everything. *And it was simply stated,* orally but often, that any measures and means employed were good, since they were being used for a lofty purpose; that no interrogator would be made to answer for the death of an accused; and that the prison doctor should interfere as little as possible with the course of the investigation. In all probability, they exchanged experiences in comradely fashion; "they learned from the most successful workers." Then, too, "material rewards" were offered—higher pay for night work, bonus pay for fast work—and there were also definite warnings that interrogators who could not cope with their tasks . . . Even the chief of some provincial NKVD administration, if some sort of mess developed, could show Stalin his hands were clean: he had issued no direct instructions to use torture! But at the same time he had ensured that torture would be used!

Understanding that their superiors were taking precautions for self-protection, some of the rank-and-file interrogators—not, however, those who drank like maniacs—tried to start off with milder methods, and even when they intensified them, they tried to avoid those that left obvious marks: an eye gouged out, an ear torn off, a backbone broken, even bruises all over the body.

That is why in 1937 we observe no general consistency of methods—except for enforced sleeplessness—in the administrations of the various provinces, or for that matter among the different interrogators of a single administration.[10]

What they did have in common, however, was that they gave precedence to the so-called *light* methods (we will see what they were immediately). This way was sure. Indeed, the actual boundaries of human equilibrium are very narrow, and it is not really necessary to use a rack or hot coals to drive the average human being out of his mind.

Let us try to list some of the simplest methods which break the will and the character of the prisoner without leaving marks on his body.

Let us begin with *psychological* methods. These methods have enormous and even annihilating impact on rabbits who have never been prepared for prison suffering. And it isn't easy even for a person who holds strong convictions.

1. First of all: *night.* Why is it that all the main work of breaking down human souls went on at *night?* Why, from their very earliest years, did the *Organs* select the *night?* Because at night, the prisoner torn from sleep, even though he has not yet been tortured by sleeplessness, lacks his normal daytime equanimity and common sense. He is more vulnerable.

2. *Persuasion* in a sincere tone is the very simplest method. Why play at cat and mouse, so to speak? After all, having spent some time among others undergoing interrogation, the prisoner has come to see what the situation is. And so the interrogator says to him in a lazily friendly way: "Look, you're going to get a prison term whatever happens. But if you resist, *you'll croak* right here in prison, you'll lose your health. But if you go to camp, you'll have fresh air and sunlight. . . . So why not sign right now?" Very logical. And those who agree and sign are

10. It is common talk that Rostov-on-the-Don and Krasnodar were particularly distinguished for the cruelty of their tortures, but this has not been proved.

smart, if . . . if the matter concerns only themselves! But that's rarely so. A struggle is inevitable.

Another variant of persuasion is particularly appropriate to the Party member. "If there are shortages and even famine in the country, then you as a Bolshevik have to make up your mind: can you admit that the whole Party is to blame? Or the whole Soviet government?" "No, of course not!" the director of the flax depot hastened to reply. "Then be brave, and shoulder the blame yourself!" And he did!

3. *Foul language* is not a clever method, but it can have a powerful impact on people who are well brought up, refined, delicate. I know of two cases involving priests, who capitulated to foul language alone. One of them, in the Butyrki in 1944, was being interrogated by a woman. At first when he'd come back to our cell he couldn't say often enough how polite she was. But once he came back very despondent, and for a long time he refused to tell us how, with her legs crossed high, she had begun to *curse*. (I regret that I cannot cite one of her little phrases here.)

4. *Psychological contrast* was sometimes effective: sudden reversals of tone, for example. For a whole or part of the interrogation period, the interrogator would be extremely friendly, addressing the prisoner formally by first name and patronymic, and promising everything. Suddenly he would brandish a paperweight and shout: "Foo, you rat! I'll put nine grams of lead in your skull!" And he would advance on the accused, clutching hands outstretched as if to grab him by the hair, fingernails like needles. (This worked very, very well with women prisoners.)

Or as a variation on this: two interrogators would take turns. One would shout and bully. The other would be friendly, almost gentle. Each time the accused entered the office he would tremble —which would it be? He wanted to do everything to please the gentle one because of his different manner, even to the point of signing and confessing to things that had never happened.

5. Preliminary *humiliation* was another approach. In the famous cellars of the Rostov-on-the-Don GPU (House 33), which were lit by lenslike insets of thick glass in the sidewalk above the former storage basement, prisoners awaiting interrogation were made to lie face down for several hours in the main corridor and forbidden to raise their heads or make a

sound. They lay this way, like Moslems at prayer, until the guard touched a shoulder and took them off to interrogation. Another case: At the Lubyanka, Aleksandra O——va refused to give the testimony demanded of her. She was transferred to Lefortovo. In the admitting office, a woman jailer ordered her to undress, allegedly for a medical examination, took away her clothes, and locked her in a "box" naked. At that point the men jailers began to peer through the peephole and to appraise her female attributes with loud laughs. If one were systematically to question former prisoners, many more such examples would certainly emerge. They all had but a single purpose: to dishearten and humiliate.

6. Any method of inducing extreme *confusion* in the accused might be employed. Here is how F.I.V. from Krasnogorsk, Moscow Province, was interrogated. (This was reported by I. A. P——ev.) During the interrogation, the interrogator, a woman, undressed in front of him by stages (a striptease!), all the time continuing the interrogation as if nothing were going on. She walked about the room and came close to him and tried to get him to give in. Perhaps this satisfied some personal quirk in her, but it may also have been cold-blooded calculation, an attempt to get the accused so muddled that he would sign. And she was in no danger. She had her pistol, and she had her alarm bell.

7. *Intimidation* was very widely used and very varied. It was often accompanied by *enticement* and by *promises* which were, of course, false. In 1924: "If you don't confess, you'll go to the Solovetsky Islands. Anybody who confesses is turned loose." In 1944: "Which camp you'll be sent to depends on us. Camps are different. We've got hard-labor camps now. If you confess, you'll go to an easy camp. If you're stubborn, you'll get twenty-five years in handcuffs in the mines!" Another form of intimidation was threatening a prisoner with a prison worse than the one he was in. "If you keep on being stubborn, we'll send you to Lefortovo" (if you are in the Lubyanka), "to Sukhanovka" (if you are at Lefortovo). "They'll find another way to talk to you there." You have already gotten used to things where you are; the regimen seems to be *not so bad;* and what kind of torments await you *elsewhere?* Yes, and you also have to be transported there. . . . Should you give in?

Intimidation worked beautifully on those who had not yet

been arrested but had simply received an official summons to the Bolshoi Dom—the Big House. He (or she) still had a lot to lose. He (or she) was frightened of everything—that they wouldn't let him (or her) out today, that they would confiscate his (or her) belongings or apartment. He would be ready to give all kinds of testimony and make all kinds of concessions in order to avoid these dangers. She, of course, would be ignorant of the Criminal Code, and, at the very least, at the start of the questioning they would push a sheet of paper in front of her with a fake citation from the Code: "I have been warned that for giving false testimony . . . five years of imprisonment." (In actual fact, under Article 95, it is two years.) "For refusal to give testimony—five years . . ." (In actual fact, under Article 92, it is up to three months.) Here, then, one more of the interrogator's basic methods has entered the picture and will continue to re-enter it.

8. The *lie*. We lambs were forbidden to lie, but the interrogator could tell all the lies he felt like. Those articles of the law did not apply to him. We had even lost the yardstick with which to gauge: what does he get for lying? He could confront us with as many documents as he chose, bearing the forged signatures of our kinfolk and friends—and it would be just a skillful interrogation technique.

Intimidation through enticement and lies was the fundamental method for bringing pressure on the *relatives* of the arrested person when they were called in to give testimony. "If you don't tell us such and such" (whatever was being asked), "it's going to be the worse for *him*. . . . You'll be destroying him completely." (How hard for a mother to hear that!)[11] "Signing this paper" (pushed in front of the relatives) "is the only way you can save him" (destroy him).

9. *Playing on one's affection* for those one loved was a game that worked beautifully on the accused as well. It was the most effective of all methods of intimidation. One could break even a totally fearless person through his concern for those he loved. (Oh, how foresighted was the saying: "A man's family are his

11. Under the harsh laws of the Tsarist Empire, close relatives could refuse to testify. And even if they gave testimony at a preliminary investigation, they could choose to repudiate it and refuse to permit it to be used in court. And, curiously enough, kinship or acquaintance with a criminal was never in itself considered evidence.

enemies.") Remember the Tatar who bore his sufferings—his own and those of his wife—but could not endure his daughter's! In 1930, Rimalis, a woman interrogator, used to threaten: "We'll arrest your daughter and lock her in a cell with syphilitics!" And that was a woman!

They would threaten to arrest everyone you loved. Sometimes this would be done with sound effects: Your wife has already been arrested, but her further fate depends on you. They are questioning her in the next room—just listen! And through the wall you can actually hear a woman weeping and screaming. (After all, they all sound alike; you're hearing it through a wall; and you're under terrific strain and not in a state to play the expert on voice identification. Sometimes they simply play a recording of the voice of a "typical wife"—soprano or contralto —a labor-saving device suggested by some inventive genius.) And then, without fakery, they actually show her to you through a glass door, as she walks along in silence, her head bent in grief. Yes! Your own wife in the corridors of State Security! You have destroyed her by your stubbornness! She has already been arrested! (In actual fact, she has simply been summoned in connection with some insignificant procedural question and sent into the corridor at just the right moment, after being told: "Don't raise your head, or you'll be kept here!") Or they give you a letter to read, and the handwriting is exactly like hers: "I renounce you! After the filth they have told me about you, I don't need you any more!" (And since such wives do exist in our country, and such letters as well, you are left to ponder in your heart: Is that the kind of wife she really is?)

The interrogator Goldman (in 1944) was trying to extort testimony against other people from V. A. Korneyeva with the threat: "We'll confiscate your house and toss your old women into the street." A woman of deep convictions, and firm in her faith, Korneyeva had no fear whatever for herself. She was prepared to suffer. But, given our laws, Goldman's threats were all too real, and she was in torment over the fate of her loved ones. When, by morning, after a night of tearing up rejected depositions, Goldman began to write a fourth version accusing Korneyeva alone, she signed it happily and with a feeling of spiritual victory. We fail to hang on to the basic human instinct

to prove our innocence when falsely accused. How can we there? We were even glad when we succeeded in taking all the guilt on our own shoulders.[12]

Just as there is no classification in nature with rigid boundaries, it is impossible rigidly to separate psychological methods from *physical* ones. Where, for example, should we classify the following amusement?

10. *Sound effects*: The accused is made to stand twenty to twenty-five feet away and is then forced to speak more and more loudly and to repeat everything. This is not easy for someone already weakened to the point of exhaustion. Or two megaphones are constructed of rolled-up cardboard, and two interrogators, coming close to the prisoner, bellow in both ears: "Confess, you rat!" The prisoner is deafened; sometimes he actually loses his sense of hearing. But this method is uneconomical. The fact is that the interrogators like some diversion in their monotonous work, and so they vie in thinking up new ideas.

11. *Tickling*: This is also a diversion. The prisoner's arms and legs are bound or held down, and then the inside of his nose is tickled with a feather. The prisoner writhes; it feels as though someone were drilling into his brain.

12. *A cigarette is put out* on the accused's skin (already mentioned above).

13. *Light effects* involve the use of an extremely bright electric light in the small, white-walled cell or "box" in which the accused is being held—a light which is never extinguished. (The electricity saved by the economies of schoolchildren and housewives!) Your eyelids become inflamed, which is very painful. And then in the interrogation room searchlights are again directed into your eyes.

14. Here is another imaginative trick: On the eve of May 1, 1933, in the Khabarovsk GPU, for *twelve* hours—all night—Chebotaryev was not interrogated, no, but was simply kept in a continual state of being *led to* interrogation. "Hey, you—hands

12. Today she says: "After eleven years, during rehabilitation proceedings they let me reread those 'depositions,' and I was gripped by a feeling of spiritual nausea. What was there to be proud of?" I myself, during the rehabilitation period, felt the very same way on hearing excerpts from my earlier depositions. As the saying goes: They bent me into a bow, and I became someone else. I did not recognize myself—how could I have signed them and still think I had not gotten off too badly?

behind your back!" They led him out of the cell, up the stairs quickly, into the interrogator's office. The guard left. But the interrogator, without asking one single question, and sometimes without even allowing Chebotaryev to sit down, would pick up the telephone: "Take away the prisoner from 107!" And so they came to get him and took him back to his cell. No sooner had he lain down on his board bunk than the lock rattled: "Chebotaryev! To interrogation. Hands behind your back!" And when he got there: "Take away the prisoner from 107!"

For that matter, the methods of bringing pressure to bear can begin a long time before the interrogator's office.

15. Prison begins with the *box*, in other words, what amounts to a closet or packing case. The human being who has just been taken from freedom, still in a state of inner turmoil, ready to explain, to argue, to struggle, is, when he first sets foot in prison, clapped into a "box," which sometimes has a lamp and a place where he can sit down, but which sometimes is dark and constructed in such a way that he can only stand up and even then is squeezed against the door. And he is held there for several hours, or for half a day, or a day. During those hours he knows absolutely nothing! Will he perhaps be confined there all his life? He has never in his life encountered anything like this, and he cannot guess at the outcome. Those first hours are passing when everything inside him is still ablaze from the unstilled storm in his heart. Some become despondent—and that's the time to subject them to their first interrogation. Others become angry—and that, too, is all to the good, for they may insult the interrogator right at the start or make a slip, and it will be all the easier to cook up their case.

16. When boxes were in short supply, they used to have another method. In the Novocherkassk NKVD, Yelena Strutinskaya was forced to remain seated on a stool in the corridor for six days in such a way that she did not lean against anything, did not sleep, did not fall off, and did not get up from it. Six days! Just try to sit that way for six hours!

Then again, as a variation, the prisoner can be forced to sit on a tall chair, of the kind used in laboratories, so that his feet do not reach the floor. They become very numb in this position. He is left sitting that way from eight to ten hours.

Or else, during the interrogation itself, when the prisoner is out in plain view, he can be forced to sit in this way: as far forward as possible on the front edge ("Move further forward! Further still!") of the chair so that he is under painful pressure during the entire interrogation. He is not allowed to stir for several hours. Is that all? Yes, that's all. Just try it yourself!

17. Depending on local conditions, a *divisional pit* can be substituted for the box, as was done in the Gorokhovets army camps during World War II. The prisoner was pushed into such a pit, ten feet in depth, six and a half feet in diameter; and beneath the open sky, rain or shine, this pit was for several days both his cell and his latrine. And ten and a half ounces of bread, and water, were lowered to him on a cord. Imagine yourself in this situation just after you've been arrested, when you're all in a boil.

Either identical orders to all Special Branches of the Red Army or else the similarities of their situations in the field led to broad use of this method. Thus, in the 36th Motorized Infantry Division, a unit which took part in the battle of Khalkhin-Gol, and which was encamped in the Mongolian desert in 1941, a newly arrested prisoner was, without explanation, given a spade by Chief of the Special Branch Samulyev and ordered to dig a pit the exact dimensions of a *grave*. (Here is a hybridization of physical and psychological methods.) When the prisoner had dug deeper than his own waist, they ordered him to stop and sit down on the bottom: his head was no longer visible. One guard kept watch over several such pits and it was as though he were surrounded by empty space.[13] They kept the accused in this desert with no protection from the Mongolian sun and with no warm clothing against the cold of the night, but no tortures—why waste effort on tortures? The ration they gave was *three and a half ounces of bread* per day and *one glass of water*. Lieutenant Chulpenyev, a giant, a boxer, twenty-one years old, spent *a month* imprisoned this way. Within ten days he was swarming with lice. After fifteen days he was summoned to interrogation for the first time.

13. This, evidently, is a Mongolian theme. In the magazine *Niva* (March 15, 1914, p. 218) there is a drawing of a Mongolian prison: each prisoner is shut in a separate trunk with a small opening for his head or for food. A jailer patrols between the trunks.

18. The accused could be compelled *to stand on his knees*—not in some figurative sense, but literally: on his knees, without sitting back on his heels, and with his back upright. People could be compelled to kneel in the interrogator's office or the corridor for twelve, or even twenty-four or forty-eight hours. (The interrogator himself could go home, sleep, amuse himself in one way or another—this was an organized system; watch was kept over the kneeling prisoner, and the guards worked in shifts.)[14] What kind of prisoner was most vulnerable to such treatment? One already broken, already inclined to surrender. It was also a good method to use with women. Ivanov-Razumnik reports a variation of it: Having set young Lordkipanidze on his knees, the interrogator urinated in his face! And what happened? Unbroken by anything else, Lordkipanidze was broken by this. Which shows that the method also worked well on proud people. . . .

19. Then there is the method of simply compelling a prisoner to *stand there*. This can be arranged so that the accused stands only while being interrogated—because that, too, exhausts and breaks a person down. It can be set up in another way—so that the prisoner sits down during interrogation but is forced to stand up between interrogations. (A watch is set over him, and the guards see to it that he doesn't lean against the wall, and if he goes to sleep and falls over he is given a kick and straightened up.) Sometimes even one day of standing is enough to deprive a person of all his strength and to force him to *testify* to *anything at all.*

20. During all these tortures which involved standing for three, four, and five days, they ordinarily *deprived a person of water.*

The most natural thing of all is to *combine* the psychological and physical methods. It is also natural to combine all the preceding methods with:

21. *Sleeplessness*, which they quite failed to appreciate in medieval times. They did not understand how narrow are the limits within which a human being can preserve his personality

14. That, after all, is how somebody's career was launched—standing guard over a prisoner on his knees. And now, in all probability, that somebody has attained high rank and his children are already grown up.

intact. Sleeplessness (yes, combined with standing, thirst, bright light, terror, and the unknown—what other tortures are needed!?) befogs the reason, undermines the will, and the human being ceases to be himself, to be his own "I." (As in Chekhov's "I Want to Sleep," but there it was much easier, for there the girl could lie down and slip into lapses of consciousness, which even in just a minute would revive and refresh the brain.) A person deprived of sleep acts half-unconsciously or altogether unconsciously, so that his testimony cannot be held against him.[15]

They used to say: "You are *not truthful* in your testimony, and *therefore* you will not be allowed to sleep!" Sometimes, as a refinement, instead of making the prisoner stand up, they made him *sit down* on a *soft* sofa, which made him want to sleep all the more. (The jailer on duty sat next to him on the same sofa and kicked him every time his eyes began to shut.) Here is how one victim—who had just sat out days in a box infested with bedbugs—describes his feelings after this torture: "Chill from great loss of blood. Irises of the eyes dried out as if someone were holding a red-hot iron in front of them. Tongue swollen from thirst and prickling as from a hedgehog at the slightest movement. Throat racked by spasms of swallowing."[16]

Sleeplessness was a great form of torture: it left no visible marks and could not provide grounds for complaint even if an inspection—something unheard of anyway—were to strike on the morrow.[17]

"They didn't let you sleep? Well, after all, this is not supposed to be a *vacation resort*. The Security officials were awake too!" (They would catch up on their sleep during the day.) One can say that sleeplessness became the universal method in the *Organs*. From being one among many tortures, it became *an integral part of the system* of State Security; it was the cheapest possible

15. Just picture a foreigner, who knows no Russian, in this muddled state, being given something to sign. Under these conditions the Bavarian Jupp Aschenbrenner signed a document admitting that he had worked on wartime gas vans. It was not until 1954, in camp, that he was finally able to prove that at the time he had been in Munich, studying to become an electric welder.

16. G. M——ch.

17. Inspection, by the way, was so totally impossible and had so emphatically *never* taken place that in 1953, when real inspectors entered the cell of former Minister of State Security Abakumov, himself a prisoner by that time, he roared with laughter, thinking their appearance was a trick intended to confuse him.

method and did not require the posting of sentries. In all the interrogation prisons the prisoners were forbidden to sleep even one minute from reveille till taps. (In Sukhanovka and several other prisons used specifically for interrogation, the cot was folded into the wall during the day; in others, the prisoners were simply forbidden to lie down, and even to close their eyes while seated.) Since the major interrogations were all conducted at night, it was automatic: whoever was undergoing interrogation got no sleep for at least five days and nights. (Saturday and Sunday nights, the interrogators themselves tried to get some rest.)

22. The above method was further implemented by *an assembly line of interrogators.* Not only were you not allowed to sleep, but for three or four days *shifts of interrogators kept up a continuous interrogation.*

23. *The bedbug-infested box* has already been mentioned. In the dark closet made of wooden planks, there were hundreds, maybe even thousands, of bedbugs, which had been allowed to multiply. The guards removed the prisoner's jacket or field shirt, and immediately the hungry bedbugs assaulted him, crawling onto him from the walls or falling off the ceiling. At first he waged war with them strenuously, crushing them on his body and on the walls, suffocated by their stink. But after several hours he weakened and let them drink his blood without a murmur.

24. *Punishment cells.* No matter how hard it was in the ordinary cell, the punishment cells were always worse. And on return from there the ordinary cell always seemed like paradise. In the punishment cell a human being was systematically worn down by starvation and also, usually, by *cold.* (In Sukhanovka Prison there were also *hot* punishment cells.) For example, the Lefortovo punishment cells were entirely unheated. There were radiators in the corridor only, and in this "heated" corridor the guards on duty *walked* in felt boots and padded jackets. The prisoner was forced to undress down to his underwear, and sometimes to his undershorts, and he was forced to spend from three to five days in the punishment cell without moving (since it was so confining). He received hot gruel on the third day only. For the first few minutes you were convinced you'd not be able to last an hour. But, by some miracle, a human being would in-

deed sit out his five days, perhaps acquiring in the course of it an illness that would last him the rest of his life.

There were various aspects to punishment cells—as, for instance, dampness and water. In the Chernovtsy Prison after the war, Masha G. was kept barefooted for two hours *and up to her ankles* in icy water—confess! (She was eighteen years old, and how she feared for her feet! She was going to have to live with them a long time.)

25. Should one consider it a variation of the punishment cell when a prisoner was *locked in an alcove?* As long ago as 1933 this was one of the ways they tortured S. A. Chebotaryev in the Khabarovsk GPU. They locked him naked in a concrete alcove in such a way that he could neither bend his knees, nor straighten up and change the position of his arms, nor turn his head. And that was not all! They began to drip cold water onto his scalp—a classic torture—which then ran down his body in rivulets. They did not inform him, of course, that this would go on for only twenty-four hours. It was awful enough at any rate for him to lose consciousness, and he was discovered the next day apparently dead. He came to on a hospital cot. They had brought him out of his faint with spirits of ammonia, caffeine, and body massage. At first he had no recollection of where he had been, or what had happened. For a whole month he was useless even for interrogation. (We may be so bold as to assume that this alcove and dripping device had not been devised for Chebotaryev alone. In 1949 my Dnepropetrovsk acquaintance had been similarly confined, without the dripping attachment, however. On a line joining Khabarovsk and Dnepropetrovsk, and over a period of sixteen years, were there not other such points as well?)

26. *Starvation* has already been mentioned in combination with other methods. Nor was it an unusual method: to starve the prisoner into confession. Actually, the starvation technique, like interrogation at night, was an integral element in the entire system of coercion. The miserly prison bread ration, amounting to ten and a half ounces in the peacetime year of 1933, and to one pound in 1945 in the Lubyanka, and permitting or prohibiting food parcels from one's family and access to the commissary, were universally applied to everyone. But there was also

the technique of intensified hunger: for example, Chulpenyev was kept for a month on three and a half ounces of bread, after which—when he had just been brought in from the pit—the interrogator Sokol placed in front of him a pot of thick borscht, and half a loaf of white bread sliced diagonally. (What does it matter, one might ask, how it was sliced? But Chulpenyev even today will insist that it was really sliced very attractively.) However, he was not given a thing to eat. How ancient it all is, how medieval, how primitive! The only thing new about it was that it was applied in a socialist society! Others, too, tell about such tricks. They were often tried. But we are going to cite another case involving Chebotaryev because it combined so many methods. They put him in the interrogator's office for seventy-two hours, and the only thing he was allowed was to be taken to the toilet. For the rest, they allowed him neither food nor drink —even though there was water in a carafe right next to him. Nor was he permitted to sleep. Throughout there were three interrogators in the office, working in shifts. One kept writing something—silently, without disturbing the prisoner. The second slept on the sofa, and the third walked around the room, and as soon as Chebotaryev fell asleep, beat him instantly. Then they switched roles. (Maybe they themselves were being punished for failure to deliver.) And then, all of a sudden, they brought Chebotaryev a meal: fat Ukrainian borscht, a chop, fried potatoes, and red wine in a crystal carafe. But because Chebotaryev had had an aversion to alcohol all his life, he refused to drink the wine, and the interrogator couldn't go too far in forcing him to, because that would have spoiled the whole game. After he had eaten, they said to him: "Now here's what you have *testified to in the presence of two witnesses.* Sign here." In other words, he was to sign what had been silently composed by one interrogator in the presence of another, who had been asleep, and a third, who had been actively working. On the very first page Chebotaryev learned he had been on intimate terms with all the leading Japanese generals and that he had received espionage assignments from all of them. He began to cross out whole pages. They beat him up and threw him out. Blaginin, another Chinese Eastern Railroad man, arrested with him, was put through the same thing; but he drank the wine and, in a state of pleasant

intoxication, signed the confession—and was shot. (Even one tiny glass can have an enormous effect on a famished man—and that was a whole carafe.)

27. *Beatings*—of a kind that leave no marks. They use rubber truncheons, and they use wooden mallets and small sandbags. It is very, very painful when they hit a bone—for example, an interrogator's jackboot on the shin, where the bone lies just beneath the skin. They beat Brigade Commander Karpunich-Braven for twenty-one days in a row. And today he says: "Even after thirty years all my bones ache—and my head too." In recollecting his own experience and the stories of others, he counts up to fifty-two methods of torture. Here is one: They grip the hand in a special vise so that the prisoner's palm lies flat on the desk—and then they hit the joints with the thin edge of a ruler. And one screams! Should we single out particularly the technique by which teeth are knocked out? They knocked out eight of Karpunich's.[18]

As everyone knows, a blow of the fist in the solar plexus, catching the victim in the middle of a breath, leaves no mark whatever. The Lefortovo Colonel Sidorov, in the postwar period, used to take a "penalty kick" with his overshoes at the dangling genitals of male prisoners. Soccer players who at one time or another have been hit in the groin by a ball know what that kind of blow is like. There is no pain comparable to it, and ordinarily the recipient loses consciousness.[19]

28. In the Novorossisk NKVD they invented a machine for squeezing fingernails. As a result it could be observed later at transit prisons that many of those from Novorossisk had lost their fingernails.

29. And what about the *strait jacket?*

30. And *breaking the prisoner's back?* (As in that same Khabarovsk GPU in 1933.)

18. In the case of the Secretary of the Karelian Provincial Party Committee, G. Kupriyanov, arrested in 1949, some of the teeth they knocked out were just ordinary ones, of no particular account, but others were gold. At first they gave him a receipt that said his gold teeth were being kept for him. And then they caught themselves just in time and took away his receipt.

19. In 1918 the Moscow Revolutionary Tribunal convicted the former Tsarist jailer Bondar. The *most extreme* measure of his cruelty that was cited was the accusation that "in *one* case he had struck a political prisoner with such force that his eardrum had burst." (Krylenko, *op. cit.*, p. 16.)

31. Or *bridling* (also known as "the swan dive")? This was a Sukhanovka method—also used in Archangel, where the interrogator Ivkov applied it in 1940. A long piece of rough toweling was inserted between the prisoner's jaws like a bridle; the ends were then pulled back over his shoulders and tied to his heels. Just try lying on your stomach like a wheel, with your spine breaking—and without water and food for two days![20]

Is it necessary to go on with the list? Is there much left to enumerate? What won't idle, well-fed, unfeeling people invent?

Brother mine! Do not condemn those who, finding themselves in such a situation, turned out to be weak and confessed to more than they should have. . . . Do not be the first to cast a stone at them.

■

But here's the point! Neither these methods nor even the "lightest" methods of all are needed to wring testimony from the majority . . . for iron jaws to grip lambs who are unprepared and longing to return to their warm hearths. The relationship of forces to situations is too unequal.

Oh, in how new a light does our past life appear when re-examined in the interrogator's office: abounding in dangers, like an African jungle. And we had considered it so simple!

You, A, and your friend, B, have known each other for years and have complete faith in one another. When you met, you spoke out boldly about political matters large and small. No one else was present. There was no one who could have overheard you. And you have not denounced each other—not at all.

But at this point, for some reason, you, A, have been marked, hauled out of the herd by the ears, and arrested. And for some reason—well, maybe not without a denunciation on somebody's part, and not without your apprehensions as to the fate of your loved ones, and not without a certain lack of sleep, and not without a bit of punishment cell—you have decided to write yourself off but at the same time not to betray anyone else at any price.

You have therefore confessed in four depositions, and signed them—declaring yourself to be a sworn enemy of Soviet power

20. N.K.G.

—because you used to tell jokes about the Leader, because you thought there should be a choice of candidates at elections, because you went into the voting booth only in order to cross out the name of the only candidate and would have done so except there was no ink in the inkwell, and because there was a 16-meter band on your radio on which you tried to catch parts of Western broadcasts through the jamming. Your own *tenner* has been assured, yet your ribs have remained whole, and so far you have not caught pneumonia. You have not sold anyone out; and it seems to you that you have worked things out sensibly. You have already informed your cellmates that in your opinion your interrogation is probably coming to an end.

But lo and behold! Admiring his own handwriting, and with deliberation, the interrogator begins to fill out deposition No. 5. Question: Were you friendly with B? Answer: Yes. Question: Were you frank with him about politics? Answer: No, no, I did not trust him. Question: But you met often? Answer: Not very. Question: What does that mean, not very? According to testimony from your neighbors, he was at your house on such and such a day, and on such and such, and on such and such just in the past month. Was he? Answer: Maybe. Question: And it was observed that on these occasions, as always, you did not drink, you did not make any noise, you spoke very quietly, and you couldn't be overheard even in the corridor? (Well, friends, drink up! Break bottles! Curse at the top of your lungs! On that basis you will be considered reliable.) Answer: Well, what of it? Question: And you used to visit him too. And you said to him on the phone, for example: "We spent such an interesting evening." Then they saw you on the street at an intersection. You were standing there together in the cold for half an hour, and you both had gloomy faces and dissatisfied expressions; in fact, they even took photographs of you during that meeting. (The technological resources of agents, my friends, the technology of agents!) So *what did you talk about* during these meetings?

What about? That's a leading question! Your first idea is to say that you've forgotten what you talked about. Are you really obliged to remember? So! You've forgotten your first conversation. And the second one too? And the third? And even your interesting evening? And that time at the intersection? And your

conversations with C? And your conversations with D? No, you think: "I forgot" is not the way out; you will be unable to maintain that position. And your mind, still shocked by your arrest, in the grip of fear, muddled by sleeplessness and hunger, seeks a way out: how to play it shrewdly in a manner that will have some verisimilitude and outsmart the interrogator.

What about? It is fine if you talked about hockey—that, friends, is in all cases the least troublesome! Or about women, or even about science. Then you can repeat what was said. (Science is not too far removed from hockey, but in our time everything to do with science is classified information and they may get you for a violation of the Decree on Revealing State Secrets.) But what if you did in actual fact talk about the latest arrests in the city? Or about the collective farms? (Of course, critically—for who has anything good to say about them?) Or about reducing the rate of pay for piecework? The fact remains that you frowned for half an hour at the intersection—what were you talking about there?

Maybe B has already been arrested. The interrogator assures you that he has been, and that he has already given evidence against you, and that they are about to bring him in for a confrontation with you. Maybe he is sitting home very calmly and quietly, but they might very well bring him in for questioning and then they will find out from him what you were frowning about for half an hour at that intersection.

At this point, too late, you have come to understand that, because of the way life is, you and he ought to have reached an agreement every time you parted and remembered clearly *what you were going to say if you were asked what you had talked about that day*. Then, regardless of interrogations, your testimony and his would agree. But you had not made any such agreement. You had unfortunately not understood what kind of a jungle you lived in.

Should you say that you were talking about going on a fishing trip? But then B might say that there was never any discussion of fishing, that you talked about correspondence-school courses. In that case, instead of causing the investigation to ease up a bit, you would only tie the noose tighter: what about, what about, what about?

And the idea flashes through your mind—is it a brilliant or a fatal one?—that you ought to come as close as you can to the truth of what was actually said—of course rounding off the sharp edges and skipping the dangerous parts. After all, people say that when you lie you should always stay as close to the truth as possible. And maybe B will guess what's up and say approximately the same thing and then your testimony will coincide in some respects and they will leave you in peace.

Many years later you will come to understand that this was not really a wise idea, and that it is much smarter to play the role of someone so improbably imbecile that he can't remember one single day of his life even at the risk of being beaten. But you have been kept awake for three days. You have hardly strength enough to follow the course of your own thoughts and to maintain an imperturbable expression. And you don't have even a minute to think things over. Suddenly two interrogators—for they enjoy visiting one another—are at you: What were you talking about? What about? What about?

And you testify: We were talking about collective farms—to the effect that not everything had as yet been set to rights on them but it soon would be. We talked about the lowering of piece rates. . . . And what in particular did you say about them? That you were delighted they had been reduced? But that wasn't the way people normally talked—it was too implausible. And so as to make it seem an altogether believable conversation, you concede that you complained just a little that they were putting on the squeeze a bit with piece rates.

The interrogator writes down the deposition himself, translating it into *his own* language: At this meeting we slandered Party and government policy in the field of wages.

And someday B is going to accuse you: "Oh, you blabbermouth, and I said we were making plans to go fishing."

But you tried to outsmart your interrogator! You have a quick, abstruse mind. You are an intellectual! And you outsmarted yourself. . . .

In *Crime and Punishment,* Porfiri Petrovich makes a surprisingly astute remark to Raskolnikov, to the effect that he could have been found out only by someone who had himself gone through that same cat-and-mouse game—implying, so to speak: "I don't even have to construct my own version with you intel-

lectuals. You will put it together yourselves and bring it to me all wrapped up." Yes, that's so! An intellectual cannot reply with the delightful incoherence of Chekhov's "Malefactor." He is bound to try to build up in logical form the whole story he is being accused of, no matter how much falsehood it contains.

But the interrogator-butcher isn't interested in logic; he just wants to catch two or three phrases. He knows what he wants. And as for us—we are totally unprepared for anything.

From childhood on we are educated and trained—for our own profession; for our civil duties; for military service; to take care of our bodily needs; to behave well; even to appreciate beauty (well, this last not really all that much!). But neither our education, nor our upbringing, nor our experience prepares us in the slightest for the greatest trial of our lives: being arrested for nothing and interrogated about nothing. Novels, plays, films (their authors should themselves be forced to drink the cup of Gulag to the bottom!) depict the types one meets in the offices of interrogators as chivalrous guardians of truth and humanitarianism, as our loving fathers. We are exposed to lectures on everything under the sun—and are even herded in to listen to them. But no one is going to lecture to us about the true and extended significance of the Criminal Code; and the codes themselves are not on open shelves in our libraries, nor sold at newsstands; nor do they fall into the hands of the heedless young.

It seems a virtual fairy tale that somewhere, at the ends of the earth, an accused person can avail himself of a lawyer's help. This means having beside you in the most difficult moment of your life a clear-minded ally who knows the law.

The principle of our interrogation consists further in depriving the accused of even a knowledge of the law.

An indictment is presented. And here, incidentally, is how it's presented: "Sign it." "It's not true." "Sign." "But I'm not guilty of anything!" It turns out that you are being indicted under the provisions of Articles 58-10, Part 2, and 58-11 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Republic. "Sign!" "But what do these sections say? Let me read the Code!" "I don't have it." "Well, get it from your department head!" "He doesn't have it either. Sign!" "But I want to see it." "You are not supposed to see it. It isn't written for you but for us. You don't need it. I'll tell you what it says: these sections spell out exactly what you

are guilty of. And anyway, at this point your signature doesn't mean that you agree with the indictment but that you've read it, that it's been presented to you."

All of a sudden, a new combination of letters, UPK, flashes by on one of the pieces of paper. Your sense of caution is aroused. What's the difference between the UPK and the UK—the Criminal Code? If you've been lucky enough to catch the interrogator when he is in a good mood, he will explain it to you: the UPK is the Code of Criminal Procedure. What? This means that there are two distinct codes, not just one, of whose contents you are completely ignorant even as you are being trampled under their provisions.

Since that time ten years have passed; then fifteen. The grass has grown thick over the grave of my youth. I served out my term and even "eternal exile" as well. And nowhere—neither in the "cultural education" sections of the camps, nor in district libraries, nor even in medium-sized cities, have I seen with my own eyes, held in my own hands, been able to buy, obtain, or even *ask for* the Code of Soviet law![21]

And of the hundreds of prisoners I knew who had gone through interrogation and trial, and more than once too, who had served sentences in camp and in exile, none had ever seen the Code or held it in his hand!

It was only when both codes were thirty-five years old and on the point of being replaced by new ones that I saw them, two little paperback brothers, the UK or Criminal Code, and the UPK or Code of Criminal Procedure, on a newsstand in the Moscow subway (because they were outdated, it had been decided to release them for general circulation).

I read them today touched with emotion. For example, the UPK—the Code of Criminal Procedure:

"Article 136: The interrogator does not have the right to extract testimony or a confession from an accused by means of compulsion and threats." (It was as though they had foreseen it!)

21. Those familiar with our atmosphere of suspicion will understand why it was impossible to ask for the Code in a people's court or in the District Executive Committee. Your interest in the Code would be an extraordinary phenomenon: you must either be preparing to commit a crime or be trying to cover your tracks.

"Article 111: The interrogator is obliged to establish clearly all the relevant facts, both those tending toward acquittal and any which might lessen the accused's measure of guilt."

But it was I who helped establish Soviet power in October! It was I who shot Kolchak! I took part in the dispossession of the kulaks! I saved the state ten million rubles in lowered production costs! I was wounded twice in the war! I have three orders and decorations.

"You're not being tried for that!" History . . . the bared teeth of the interrogator: "Whatever good you may have done has nothing to do with the case."

"Article 139: The accused has the right to set forth his testimony in his own hand, and to demand the right to make corrections in the deposition written by the interrogator."

Oh, if we had only known that in time! But what I should say is: If that were only the way it really was! We were always vainly imploring the interrogator not to write "my repulsive, slanderous fabrications" instead of "my mistaken statements," or not to write "our underground weapons arsenal" instead of "my rusty Finnish knife."

If only the defendants had first been taught some prison science! If only interrogation had been run through first in rehearsal, and only afterward for real. . . . They didn't, after all, play that interrogation game with the *second-termers* of 1948: it would have gotten them nowhere. But *newcomers* had no experience, no knowledge! And there was no one from whom to seek advice.

The loneliness of the accused! That was one more factor in the success of unjust interrogation! The entire apparatus threw its full weight on one lonely and inhibited will. From the moment of his arrest and throughout the entire *shock* period of the interrogation the prisoner was, ideally, to be kept entirely alone. In his cell, in the corridor, on the stairs, in the offices, he was not supposed to encounter others like himself, in order to avoid the risk of his gleaning a bit of sympathy, advice, support from someone's smile or glance. The *Organs* did everything to blot out for him his future and distort his present: to lead him to believe that his friends and family had all been arrested and that material proof of his guilt had been found. It was their habit to exagger-

ate their power to destroy him and those he loved as well as their authority to pardon (which the *Organs* didn't even have). They pretended that there was some connection between the sincerity of a prisoner's "repentance" and a reduction in his sentence or an easing of the camp regimen. (No such connection ever existed.) While the prisoner was still in a state of shock and torment and totally beside himself, they tried to get from him very quickly as many irreparably damaging items of evidence as possible and to implicate with him as many totally innocent persons as possible. Some defendants became so depressed in these circumstances that they even asked not to have the depositions read to them. They could not stand hearing them. They asked merely to be allowed to sign them, just to sign and get it over with. Only after all this was over would the prisoner be released from solitary into a large cell, where, in belated desperation, he would discover and count over his mistakes one by one.

How was it possible not to make mistakes in such a duel? Who could have failed to make a mistake?

We said that "ideally he was to be kept alone." However, in the overcrowded prisons of 1937, and, for that matter, of 1945 as well, this ideal of solitary confinement for a newly arrested defendant could not be attained. Almost from his first hours, the prisoner was in fact in a terribly overcrowded common cell.

But there were virtues to this arrangement, too, which more than made up for its flaws. The overcrowding of the cells not only took the place of the tightly confined solitary "box" but also assumed the character of a first-class *torture* in itself . . . one that was particularly useful because it continued for whole days and weeks—with no effort on the part of the interrogators. The prisoners tortured the prisoners! The jailers pushed so many prisoners into the cell that not every one had even a piece of floor; some were sitting on others' feet, and people walked on people and couldn't even move about at all. Thus, in the Kishinev KPZ's —Cells for Preliminary Detention—in 1945, they pushed *eighteen* prisoners into a cell designed for the solitary confinement of one person; in Lugansk in 1937 it was *fifteen*.[22] And in 1938

22. And the interrogation there lasted eight to ten months at a time. "Maybe Klim [Voroshilov] had one of these to himself," said the fellows there. (Was he, in fact, ever imprisoned?)

Ivanov-Razumnik found *one hundred forty* prisoners in a standard Butyrki cell intended for twenty-five—with toilets so overburdened that prisoners were taken to the toilet only once a day, sometimes at night; and the same thing was true of their outdoor walk as well.[23] It was Ivanov-Razumnik who in the Lubyanka reception "kennel" calculated that for weeks at a time there were *three* persons for each square yard of floor space (just as an experiment, try to fit three people into that space!).[24] In this "kennel" there was neither ventilation nor a window, and the prisoners' body heat and breathing raised the temperature to 40 or 45 degrees Centigrade—104 to 113 degrees Fahrenheit—and everyone sat there in undershorts with their winter clothing piled beneath them. Their naked bodies were pressed against one another, and they got eczema from one another's sweat. They sat like that for *weeks at a time,* and were given neither fresh air nor water—except for gruel and tea in the morning.[25]

And if at the same time the latrine bucket replaced all other types of toilet (or if, on the other hand, there was no latrine bucket for use between trips to an outside toilet, as was the case in several Siberian prisons); and if four people ate from one bowl, sitting on each other's knees; and if someone was hauled out for interrogation, and then someone else was pushed in beaten up, sleepless, and broken; and if the appearance of such broken men was more persuasive than any threats on the part of the interrogators; and if, by then, death and any camp whatever seemed easier to a prisoner who had been left unsummoned for months than his tormented current situation—perhaps this really

23. That same year in the Butyrki, those newly arrested, who had already been processed through the bath and the boxes, sat on the stairs for several days at a stretch, waiting for departing prisoner transports to leave and release space in the cells. T——v had been imprisoned in the Butyrki seven years earlier, in 1931, and says that it was overcrowded under the bunks and that prisoners lay on the asphalt floor. I myself was imprisoned seven years later, in 1945, and it was just the same. But recently I received from M. K. B——ch valuable personal testimony about overcrowding in the Butyrki in *1918.* In October of that year—during the second month of the Red Terror—it was so full that they even set up a cell for seventy women in the laundry. When, then, was the Butyrki not crowded?

24. But this, too, is no miracle: in the Vladimir *Internal Prison* in 1948, thirty people had to stand in a cell ten feet by ten feet in size! (S. Potapov.)

25. By and large there is a good deal in Ivanov-Razumnik's book that is superficial and personal, and there are many exhaustingly monotonous jokes. But the real life of the cells in the 1937–1938 period is very well described there.

did replace the theoretically ideal isolation in solitary. And you could not always decide in such a porridge of people with whom to be forthright; and you could not always find someone from whom to seek advice. And you would believe in the tortures and beatings not when the interrogator threatened you with them but when you saw their results on other prisoners.

You could learn from those who had suffered that they could give you a salt-water douche in the throat and then leave you in a box for a day tormented by thirst (Karpunich). Or that they might scrape the skin off a man's back with a grater till it bled and then oil it with turpentine. (Brigade Commander Rudolf Pintsov underwent both treatments. In addition, they pushed needles under his nails, and poured water into him to the bursting point—demanding that he confess to having *wanted* to turn his brigade of tanks against the government during the November parade.)[26] And from Aleksandrov, the former head of the Arts Section of the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, who has a broken spinal column which tilts to one side, and who cannot control his tear ducts and thus cannot stop crying, one can learn how *Abakumov* himself could beat—in 1948.

Yes, yes, Minister of State Security Abakumov himself did not by any means spurn such menial labor. (A Suvorov at the head of his troops!) He was not averse to taking a rubber truncheon in his hands every once in a while. And his deputy Ryumin was even more willing. He did this at Sukhanovka in the "Generals' " interrogation office. The office had imitation-walnut paneling on the walls, silk portieres at the windows and doors, and a great Persian carpet on the floor. In order not to spoil all this beauty, a dirty runner bespattered with blood was rolled out on top of the carpet when a prisoner was being beaten. When Ryumin was doing the beating, he was assisted not by some ordinary guard but by a colonel. "And so," said Ryumin politely, stroking his rubber truncheon, which was four centimeters—an inch and a half—thick, "you have survived trial by sleeplessness with honor." (Alexander D.

26. In actual fact, he did *lead* his brigade at the parade, but for some reason he did *not* turn it against the government. But this was not taken into account. However, after these most varied tortures, he was sentenced to ten years by the OSO. To that degree, the gendarmes themselves had no faith in their achievements.

had cleverly managed to last a month "without sleep" by sleeping while he was standing up.) "So now we will try the club. Prisoners can't take more than two or three sessions of this. Let down your trousers and lie down on the runner." The colonel sat down on the prisoner's back. A.D. was going to *count* the blows. He didn't yet know about a blow from a rubber truncheon on the sciatic nerve when the buttocks have disappeared as a consequence of prolonged starvation. The effect is not felt in the place where the blow is delivered—it explodes inside the head. After the first blow the victim was mad with pain and broke his nails on the carpet. Ryumin beat away, trying to hit accurately. The colonel pressed down on A.D.'s torso—this was just the right sort of work for three big shoulder-board stars, assisting the all-powerful Ryumin! (After the beating the prisoner could not walk and, of course, was not carried. They just dragged him along the floor. What was left of his buttocks was soon so swollen that he could not button his trousers, and yet there were practically no scars. He was hit by a violent case of diarrhea, and, sitting there on the latrine bucket in solitary, A.D. guffawed. He went through a second and a third session, and his skin cracked, and Ryumin went wild, and started to beat him on the stomach, breaking through the intestinal wall and creating an enormous hernia through which A.D.'s intestines protruded. The prisoner was taken off to the Butyrki hospital with a case of peritonitis, and for the time being their attempts to compel him to commit a foul deed were suspended.)

That is how they can torture you too! After that it could seem a simple fatherly caress when the Kishinev interrogator Danilov beat Father Viktor Shipovalnikov across the back of the head with a poker and pulled him by his long hair. (It is very convenient to drag a priest around in that fashion; ordinary laymen can be dragged by the beard from one corner of the office to the other. And Richard Ohola—a Finnish Red Guard, and a participant in the capture of British agent Sidney Reilly, and commander of a company during the suppression of the Kronstadt revolt—was lifted up with pliers first by one end of his great mustaches and then by the other, and held for ten minutes with his feet off the floor.)

But the most awful thing they can do with you is this: undress you from the waist down, place you on your back on the floor,

pull your legs apart, seat assistants on them (from the glorious corps of sergeants!) who also hold down your arms; and then the interrogator (and women interrogators have not shrunk from this) stands between your legs and with the toe of his boot (or of her shoe) gradually, steadily, and with ever greater pressure crushes against the floor those organs which once made you a man. He looks into your eyes and repeats and repeats his questions or the betrayal he is urging on you. If he does not press down too quickly or just a shade too powerfully, you still have fifteen seconds left in which to scream that you will confess to everything, that you are ready to see arrested all twenty of those people he's been demanding of you, or that you will slander in the newspapers everything you hold holy. . . .

And may you be judged by God, but not by people. . . .

"There is no way out! You have to confess to everything!" whisper the stoolies who have been planted in the cell.

"It's a simple question: hang onto your health!" say people with common sense.

"You can't get new teeth," those who have already lost them nod at you.

"They are going to convict you in any case, whether you confess or whether you don't," conclude those who have got to the bottom of things.

"Those who don't sign get shot!" prophesies someone else in the corner. "Out of vengeance! So as not to risk any leaks about how they conduct interrogations."

"And if you die in the interrogator's office, they'll tell your relatives you've been sentenced to camp without the right of correspondence. And then just let them look for you."

If you are an orthodox Communist, then another orthodox Communist will sidle up to you, peering about with hostile suspicion, and he'll begin to whisper in your ear so that the uninitiated cannot overhear:

"It's our duty to support Soviet interrogation. It's a combat situation. We ourselves are to blame. We were too softhearted; and now look at all the rot that has multiplied in the country. There is a vicious secret war going on. Even here we are surrounded by enemies. Just listen to what they are saying! The

Party is not obliged to account for what it does to every single one of us—to explain the whys and wherefores. If they ask us to, that means we should sign."

And another orthodox Communist sidles up:

"I signed denunciations against thirty-five people, against all my acquaintances. And I advise you too: Drag along as many names as you can in your wake, as many as you can. That way it will become obvious that the whole thing is an absurdity and they'll let everyone out!"

But that is precisely what the *Organs* need. The conscientiousness of the orthodox Communist and the purpose of the NKVD naturally coincide. Indeed, the NKVD needs just that arched fan of names, that fat multiplication of them. That is the mark of quality of their work, and these are also new patches of woods in which to set out snares. "Your accomplices, accomplices! Others who share your views!" That is what they keep pressing to shake out of everyone. They say that R. Ralov named Cardinal Richelieu as one of his accomplices and that the Cardinal was in fact so listed in his depositions—and no one was astonished by this until Ralov was questioned about it at his rehabilitation proceedings in 1956.

Apropos of the orthodox Communists, Stalin was necessary, for such a *purge* as that, yes, but a Party like that was necessary too: the majority of those in power, up to the very moment of their own arrest, were pitiless in arresting others, obediently destroyed their peers in accordance with those same instructions and handed over to retribution any friend or comrade-in-arms of yesterday. And all the big Bolsheviks, who now wear martyrs' halos, managed to be the executioners of other Bolsheviks (not even taking into account how *all of them* in the first place had been the executioners of non-Communists). Perhaps 1937 was *needed* in order to show how little their whole ideology was worth —that *ideology* of which they boasted so enthusiastically, turning Russia upside down, destroying its foundations, trampling everything it held sacred underfoot, that Russia where *they themselves* had never been threatened by *such* retribution. The victims of the Bolsheviks from 1918 to 1946 never conducted themselves

so despicably as the leading Bolsheviks when the lightning struck them. If you study in detail the whole history of the arrests and trials of 1936 to 1938, the principal revulsion you feel is not against Stalin and his accomplices, but against the humiliatingly repulsive defendants—nausea at their spiritual baseness after their former pride and implacability.

So what is the answer? How can you stand your ground when you are weak and sensitive to pain, when people you love are still alive, when you are unprepared?

What do you need to make you stronger than the interrogator and the whole trap?

From the moment you go to prison you must put your cozy past firmly behind you. At the very threshold, you must say to yourself: "My life is over, a little early to be sure, but there's nothing to be done about it. I shall never return to freedom. I am condemned to die—now or a little later. But later on, in truth, it will be even harder, and so the sooner the better. I no longer have any property whatsoever. For me those I love have died, and for them I have died. From today on, my body is useless and alien to me. Only my spirit and my conscience remain precious and important to me."

Confronted by such a prisoner, the interrogation will tremble.

Only the man who has renounced everything can win that victory.

But how can one turn one's body to stone?

Well, they managed to turn some individuals from the Berdyayev circle into puppets for a trial, but they didn't succeed with Berdyayev. They wanted to drag him into an open trial; they arrested him twice; and (in 1922) he was subjected to a night interrogation by Dzerzhinsky himself. Kamenev was there too (which means that he, too, was not averse to using the Cheka in an ideological conflict). But Berdyayev did not humiliate himself. He did not beg or plead. He set forth firmly those religious and moral principles which had led him to refuse to accept the political authority established in Russia. And not only did they come to the conclusion that he would be useless for a trial, but they liberated him.

A human being has *a point of view!*

N. Stolyarova recalls an old woman who was her neighbor on the Butyrki bunks in 1937. They kept on interrogating her every night. Two years earlier, a former Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church, who had escaped from exile, had spent a night at her home on his way through Moscow. "But he wasn't the former Metropolitan, he was the Metropolitan! Truly, I was worthy of receiving him." "All right then. To whom did he go when he left Moscow?" "I know, but I won't tell you!" (The Metropolitan had escaped to Finland via an underground railroad of believers.) At first the interrogators took turns, and then they went after her in groups. They shook their fists in the little old woman's face, and she replied: "There is nothing you can do with me even if you cut me into pieces. After all, you are afraid of your bosses, and you are afraid of each other, and you are even afraid of killing me." (They would lose contact with the underground railroad.) "But I am not afraid of anything. I would be glad to be judged by God right this minute."

There were such people in 1937 too, people who did not return to their cell for their bundles of belongings, who chose death, who *signed* nothing denouncing anyone.

One can't say that the history of the Russian revolutionaries has given us any better examples of steadfastness. But there is no comparison anyway, because none of our revolutionaries ever knew what a really *good* interrogation could be, with fifty-two different methods to choose from.

Sheshkovsky did not subject Radishchev to torture. And because of contemporary custom, Radishchev knew perfectly well that his sons would serve as officers in the imperial guard no matter what happened to him, and that their lives wouldn't be cut short. Nor would anyone confiscate Radishchev's family estate. Nonetheless, in the course of his brief two-week interrogation, this outstanding man renounced his beliefs and his book and begged for mercy.

Nicholas I didn't have enough imagination to arrest the wives of the Decembrists and compel them to scream in the interrogation room next door, or even to torture the Decembrists themselves. But in any case he didn't need to. Even Ryleyev "answered

fully, frankly, and hid nothing." Even Pestel *broke down* and named comrades (who were still free) assigned to bury *Russkaya Pravda* and the very place where it had been buried.[27] There were very few who, like Lunin, expressed disdain and contempt for the investigating commission. The majority behaved badly and got one another more deeply involved. Many of them begged abjectly to be pardoned! Zavalishin put all the blame on Ryleyev. Y. P. Obolensky and S. P. Trubetskoi couldn't wait to slander Griboyedov—which even Nicholas I didn't believe.

Bakunin in his *Confessions* abjectly groveled before Nicholas I—thereby avoiding execution. Was this wretchedness of soul? Or revolutionary cunning?

One would think that those who decided to assassinate Alexander II must have been people of the highest selflessness and dedication. After all, they knew what the stakes were! Grinyevitsky shared the fate of the Tsar, but Rysakov remained alive and was held for interrogation. And *that very day* he *blabbed* on the participants in the plot and identified their secret meeting places. Out of fear for his young life he rushed to give the government more information than he could ever have been suspected of having. He nearly choked with repentance; he proposed to "expose all the secrets of the Anarchists."

At the end of the last century and the beginning of this one, the Tsarist interrogator immediately *withdrew* his question if the prisoner found it inappropriate or too intimate. But in Kresty Prison in 1938, when the old political hard-labor prisoner Zelensky was whipped with ramrods with his pants pulled down like a small boy, he wept in his cell: "My Tsarist interrogator didn't even dare address me rudely."

Or, for example, we learn from recently published research[28] that the Tsarist gendarmes seized the manuscript of Lenin's essay "What Are Our Ministers Thinking Of?" but were *unable* to get at its author:

"At the interrogation the gendarmes, *just as one might have expected,* learned very little from the student Vaneyev. [The

27. In part, the reason for this was the same as in the case of Bukharin many years later. They were, after all, being interrogated by their social equals, their class brothers, and so their desire to *explain* everything was only natural.

28. R. Peresvetov, *Novy Mir,* No. 4, 1962.

italics here and throughout this quotation are my own.] He informed them *only* that the manuscripts found at his place had been brought to him in one package for safekeeping several days before the search by a certain person *whom he did not wish to name*. Therefore the interrogator's *sole alternative* was to turn the manuscripts over for expert analysis." The experts learned nothing. (What did he mean—his "sole alternative"? What about icy water up to the ankles? Or a salt-water douche? Or Ryumin's truncheon?) It would seem that the author of this article, R. Peresvetov, himself *served time* for several years and might easily have enumerated what "alternatives" the interrogator actually had when confronting the guardian of Lenin's "What Are Our Ministers Thinking Of?"

As S. P. Melgunov recollects: "That was a Tsarist prison, a prison of blessed memory, which political prisoners nowadays can only recall with a feeling almost of gladness."[29]

But that is a case of displaced concepts. The yardstick is totally different. Just as oxcart drivers of Gogol's time could not have imagined the speed of a jet plane, those who have never gone through the receiving-line meat grinder of Gulag cannot grasp the true possibilities of interrogation.

We read in *Izvestiya* for May 24, 1959, that Yulipa Rumyantseva was confined in the internal prison of a Nazi camp while they tried to find out from her the whereabouts of her husband, who had escaped from that same camp. She knew, but she refused to tell! For a reader who is not in the know this is a model of heroism. For a reader with a bitter Gulag past it's a model of inefficient interrogation: Yuliya did not die under torture, and she was not driven insane. A month later she was simply released—still very much alive and kicking.

■

All these thoughts about standing firm as a rock were quite unknown to me in February, 1945. Not only was I not in the least prepared to cut my cozy ties with earth, I was even quite

29. S. P. Melgunov, *Vospominaniya i Dnevniki, (Memoirs and Diaries)*, Vol. 1, Paris, 1964, p. 139.

angry for a long time because a hundred or so Faber pencils had been taken away from me when I was arrested. Looking back on my interrogation from my long subsequent imprisonment, I had no reason to be proud of it. I might have borne myself more firmly; and in all probability I could have maneuvered more skillfully. But my first weeks were characterized by a mental blackout and a slump into depression. The only reason these recollections do not torment me with remorse is that, thanks be to God, I avoided getting anyone else arrested. But I came close to it.

Although we were front-line officers, Nikolai V. and I, who were involved in the same case, got ourselves into prison through a piece of childish stupidity. He and I corresponded during the war, between two sectors of the front; and though we knew perfectly well that wartime censorship of correspondence was in effect, we indulged in fairly outspoken expressions of our political outrage and in derogatory comments about the Wisest of the Wise, whom we labeled with the transparently obvious nickname of Pakhan or *Ringleader of the Thieves.* (When, later on, I reported our *case* in various prisons, our naïveté aroused only laughter and astonishment. Other prisoners told me that two more such stupid jackasses couldn't exist. And I became convinced of it myself. Then suddenly, one day, reading some documents on the case of Aleksandr Ulyanov, Lenin's elder brother, I learned that he and his confederates got caught in exactly the same way—a careless exchange of letters. And that was the only reason Alexander III didn't die on March 1, 1887.)[30]

The office of my interrogator, I. I. Yezepov, was high-ceilinged, spacious and bright, with an enormous window. (The Rossiya Insurance Company had not been built with torture in mind.) And, putting to use its seventeen feet of height, a full-length, vertical, thirteen-foot portrait of that powerful Sovereign hung

30. A member of the group, Andreyushkin sent a frank letter to his friend in Kharkov: "I am firmly convinced that we are going to have the most merciless terror—and in the fairly near future too. . . . Red Terror is my hobby. . . . I am worried about my addressee. . . . If he gets *it*, then I may get *it* too, and that will be unfortunate because I will drag in a lot of very effective people." It was not the first such letter he had written! And the unhurried search this letter initiated continued for five weeks, via Kharkov, in order to discover who in St. Petersburg had written it. Andreyushkin's identity was not established until February 28. On March 1, the bomb throwers, bombs in hand, were arrested on Nevsky Prospekt just before the attempted assassination.

there, toward whom I, grain of sand that I was, had expressed my hatred. Sometimes the interrogator stood in front of the portrait and declaimed dramatically: "We are ready to lay down our lives for him! We are ready to lie down in the path of oncoming tanks for his sake!" Face to face with the altarlike grandeur of that portrait, my mumbling about some kind of purified Leninism seemed pitiful, and I myself seemed a blasphemous slanderer deserving only death.

The contents of our letters provided more than enough, in keeping with the standards of those times, to sentence us both. Therefore my interrogator did not have to invent anything. He merely tried to cast his noose around everyone I had ever written to or received a letter from. I had expressed myself vehemently in letters to friends my own age and had been almost reckless in spelling out seditious ideas, but my friends for some reason had continued to correspond with me! And some suspicious phrases could be found in their replies to my letters.[31] And then Yezepov, like Porfiri Petrovich, demanded that I explain it all in a coherent way: if we had expressed ourselves in such a fashion in letters that we knew were subject to censorship, what could we have said to each other face to face? I could not convince him that all my fire-eating talk was confined to my letters. And at that point, with muddled mind, I had to undertake to weave something credible about my meetings with my friends—meetings referred to in my letters. What I said had to jibe with the letters, in such a way as to be on the very edge of political matters and yet not fall under that Criminal Code. Moreover, these explanations had to pour forth quickly, all in one breath, so as to convince this veteran interrogator of my naïveté, my humility, my total honesty. The main thing was not to provoke my lazy interrogator to any interest in looking through that accursed load of stuff I had

31. One of our school friends was nearly arrested because of me at this time. It was an enormous relief to me to learn later that he was still free! But then, twenty-two years later, he wrote to me: "On the basis of your published works I conclude that you take a one-sided view of life. . . . Objectively speaking, you have become the standard-bearer of Fascist reactionaries in the West, in West Germany and the United States, for example. . . . Lenin, whom, I'm convinced, you love and honor just as much as you used to, yes, and old Marx and Engels, too, would have condemned you in the severest fashion. Think about that!" Indeed, I do think about that: How sorry I am that you didn't get arrested then! How much you lost!

brought in my accursed suitcase—including many notebooks of my "War Diary," written in hard, light pencil in a needle-thin handwriting, with some of the notes already partially washed out. These diaries constituted my claim to becoming a writer. I had not believed in the capacities of our amazing memory, and throughout the war years I had tried to write down everything I saw. That would have been only half a catastrophe: I also wrote down everything I *heard* from other people. But opinions and stories which were so natural in front-line areas seemed to be treasonable here in the rear and reeked of raw imprisonment for my front-line comrades. So to prevent that interrogator from going to work on my "War Diary" and mining from it a whole case against a free front-line tribe, I repented just as much as I had to and pretended to see the light and reject my political mistakes. I became utterly exhausted from this balancing on a razor's edge, until I recognized that no one was being hauled in for a confrontation with me and distinguished the clear signs that the interrogation was drawing to an end . . . until, in the fourth month, all the notebooks of my "War Diary" were cast into the hellish maw of the Lubyanka furnace, where they burst into flame—the red pyre of one more novel which had perished in Russia—and flew out of the highest chimney in black butterflies of soot.

We used to walk in the shadow of that chimney, our exercise yard a boxlike concrete enclosure on the roof of the Big Lubyanka, six floors up. The walls rose around us to approximately three times a man's height. With our own ears we could hear Moscow—automobile horns honking back and forth. But all we could see was that chimney, the guard posted in a seventh-floor tower, and that segment of God's heaven whose unhappy fate it was to float over the Lubyanka.

Oh, that soot! It kept falling on and on in that first postwar May. So much of it fell during each of our walks that we decided the Lubyanka must be burning countless years of files. My doomed diary was only one momentary plume of that soot. I recalled a frosty sunny morning in March when I was sitting in the interrogator's office. He was asking his customary crude questions and writing down my answers, distorting my words as he did so. The sun played in the melting latticework of the frost on the wide window, through which at times I felt very much like jumping, so as to flash through Moscow at least in death and

smash onto the sidewalk five floors below, just as, in my childhood, my unknown predecessor had jumped from House 33 in Rostov-on-the-Don. In the gaps where the frost had melted, the rooftops of Moscow could be seen, rooftop after rooftop, and above them merry little puffs of smoke. But I was staring not in that direction but at a mound of piled-up manuscripts—someone else's—covering the entire center of the floor in this half-empty room, thirty-six square yards in area, manuscripts which had been dumped there a little while before and had not yet been examined. In notebooks, in file folders, in homemade binders, in tied and untied bundles, and simply in loose pages. The manuscripts lay there like the burial mound of some interred human spirit, its conical top rearing higher than the interrogator's desk, almost blocking me from his view. And brotherly pity ached in me for the labor of that unknown person who had been arrested the previous night, these spoils from the search of his premises having been dumped that very morning on the parquet floor of the torture chamber, at the feet of that thirteen-foot Stalin. I sat there and I wondered: Whose extraordinary life had they brought in for torment, for dismemberment, and then for burning?

Oh, how many ideas and works had perished in that building —a whole lost culture? Oh, soot, soot, from the Lubyanka chimneys! And the most hurtful thing of all was that our descendants would consider our generation more stupid, less gifted, less vocal than in actual fact it was.

■

One needs to have only two points in order to draw a straight line between them.

In 1920, as Ehrenburg recalls, the Cheka addressed him as follows:

"*You* prove to us that you are *not* Wrangel's agent."

And in 1950, one of the leading colonels of the MGB, Foma Fomich Zheleznov, said to his prisoners: "We are not going to sweat to prove the prisoner's guilt to him. Let *him* prove to *us* that he did *not* have hostile intent."

And along this cannibalistically artless straight line lie the recollections of countless millions.

What a speed-up and simplification of criminal investigation

previously unknown to mankind! The *Organs* altogether freed themselves of the burden of obtaining proof! Trembling and pale, the rabbit who had been caught, deprived of the right to write anyone, phone anyone, bring anything with him from freedom, deprived too of sleep, food, paper, pencils, and even buttons, seated on a bare stool in the corner of an office, had to try to find out for *himself* and display to that loafer of an interrogator *proof* that he did *not* have hostile *intentions*. If he could not discover such proof (and where would he find it?), by that very failure he provided the interrogation with *approximate* proof of his guilt!

I knew of a case in which a certain old man who had been a prisoner in Germany managed nonetheless, sitting there on his bare stool and gesturing with his cold fingers, to prove to his monster of an interrogator that he did *not* betray his Motherland and even that he did *not* have any such intention! It was a scandal! And what happened? Did they free him? Of course not —after all, he told me about this in Butyrki and not on Tverskoi Boulevard in the middle of Moscow. At that point a second interrogator joined the first and they spent a quiet evening reminiscing with the old man. Then the two interrogators signed witnesses' affidavits stating that in the course of the evening the hungry, sleepy old man had engaged in anti-Soviet propaganda! Things were said innocently—but they weren't listened to innocently. The old man was then turned over to a third interrogator, who quashed the treason indictment and neatly nailed him with that very same *tenner* for Anti-Soviet Agitation during his interrogation.

Given that interrogations had ceased to be an attempt to get at the truth, for the interrogators in difficult cases they became a mere exercise of their duties as executioners and in easy cases simply a pastime and a basis for receiving a salary.

And easy cases always existed, even in the notorious year 1937. For example, Borodko was accused of having visited his parents in Poland sixteen years before without having a passport for foreign travel. (His papa and mama lived all of ten versts—six miles—away, but the diplomats had signed away that part of Byelorussia to Poland, and in 1921 people had not yet gotten used to that fact and went back and forth as they pleased.) The interrogation took just half an hour. Question: Did you go there?

Answer: I did. Question: How? Answer: Horseback, of course. Conclusion: Take ten years for KRD.[32]

But that sort of pace smells of the Stakhanovite movement, a movement which found no disciples among the bluecaps. According to the Code of Criminal Procedure every interrogation was supposed to take two months. And if it presented difficulties, one was allowed to ask the prosecutor for several continuations of a month apiece (which, of course, the prosecutors never refused). Thus it would have been stupid to risk one's health, not to take advantage of these postponements, and, speaking in factory terms, to raise one's work norms. Having worked with voice and fist in the initial assault week of every interrogation, and thereby expended one's will and *character* (as per Vyshinsky), the interrogators had a vital interest in dragging out the remainder of every case as long as possible. That way more old, subdued cases were on hand and fewer new ones. It was considered just indecent to complete a political interrogation in two months.

The state system itself suffered from its own lack of trust and from its rigidity. These interrogators were selected personnel, but they weren't trusted either. In all probability they, too, were required to check in on arriving and check out on leaving, and the prisoners were, of course, checked in and out when called for questioning. What else could the interrogators do to keep the bookkeepers' accounts straight? They would summon one of their defendants, sit him down in a corner, ask him some terrifying question—and then forget about him while they themselves sat for a long time reading the paper, writing an outline for a political indoctrination course or personal letters, or went off to visit one another, leaving guards to act as watchdogs in their place. Peacefully batting the breeze on the sofa with a colleague who had just dropped in, the interrogator would come to himself once in a while, look threateningly at the accused, and say:

"Now there's a rat! There's a real rat for you! Well, that's all right, we'll not be stingy about his *nine grams!*"

My interrogator also made frequent use of the telephone. For example, he used to phone home and tell his wife—with his sparkling eyes directed at me—that he was going to be working all night long so she mustn't expect him before morning. (My

32. KRD = Counter-Revolutionary Activity.

heart, of course, fell. That meant he would be working *me* over all night long!) But then he would immediately dial the phone number of his mistress and, in purring tones, make a date with her for the night. (So: I would be able to get some sleep! I felt relieved.)

Thus it was that the faultless system was moderated only by the shortcomings of those who carried it out.

Certain of the more curious interrogators used to enjoy using "empty" interrogations to broaden their knowledge of life. They might ask the accused prisoner about the front (about those very German tanks beneath which they never quite managed to find the time to throw themselves). Or perhaps about the customs of European countries and lands across the sea which the prisoner had visited: about the stores and the merchandise sold in them, and particularly about procedures in foreign whorehouses and about all kinds of adventures with women.

The Code of Criminal Procedure provided that the prosecutor was to review continuously the course of every interrogation to ensure its being conducted correctly. But no one in our time ever saw him face to face until the so-called "questioning by the prosecutor," which meant the interrogation was nearing its end. I, too, was taken to such a "questioning." Lieutenant Colonel Kotov, a calm, well-nourished, impersonal blond man, who was neither nasty nor nice but essentially a cipher, sat behind his desk and, yawning, examined for the first time the file on my case. He spent fifteen minutes acquainting himself with it while I watched. (Since this "questioning" was quite unavoidable and since it was also recorded, there would have been no sense at all in his studying the file at some earlier, unrecorded time and then having had to remember details of the case for a certain number of hours.) Finally, he raised his indifferent eyes to stare at the wall and asked lazily what I wanted to add to my testimony.

He was required by law to ask what complaints I had about the conduct of the interrogation and whether coercion had been used or any violations of my legal rights had occurred. But it had been a long time since prosecutors asked such questions. And what if they had? After all, the existence of that entire Ministry building with its thousands of rooms, and of all five thousand of the Ministry's other interrogation buildings, railroad cars, caves, and dugouts scattered throughout the Soviet Union, was based

on violations of legal rights. And it certainly wasn't up to Lieutenant Colonel Kotov and me to reverse that whole process.

Anyway, all the prosecutors of any rank at all held their positions with the approval of that very same State Security which . . . they were supposed to check up on.

His own wilted state, his lack of combativeness, and his fatigue from all those endless stupid cases were somehow transmitted to me. So I didn't raise questions of truth with him. I requested only that one too obvious stupidity be corrected: two of us had been indicted in the same case, but our interrogations were conducted in different places—mine in Moscow and my friend's at the front. Therefore I was processed *singly,* yet charged under Section 11—in other words, as a *group,* an *organization.* As persuasively as possible, I requested him to cancel this additional charge under Section 11.

He leafed through the case for another five minutes, sighed, spread out his hands, and said:

"What's there to say? One person is a person and two persons are . . . people."

But one person and a half—is that an organization?

And he pushed the button for them to come and take me away.

Soon after that, late one evening in late May, in that same office with a sculptured bronze clock on the marble mantel, my interrogator summoned me for a "206" procedure. This was, in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the defendant's review of the case before his final signature. Not doubting for one moment that I would sign, the interrogator was already seated, writing the conclusion of the indictment.

I opened the cover of the thick file, and there, on the inside of the cover in printed text, I read an astonishing statement. It turned out that during the interrogation I had had the right to make written complaints against anything improper in its conduct, and that the interrogator was obliged to staple these complaints into my record! During the interrogation! Not at its end.

Alas, not one of the thousands with whom I was later imprisoned had been aware of this right.

I turned more pages. I saw photocopies of my own letters and a totally distorted interpretation of their meaning by unknown

commentators (like Captain Libin). I saw the hyperbolized lie in which Captain Yezepov had wrapped up my careful testimony. And, last but not least, I saw the idiocy whereby I, one individual, was accused as a "group"!

"I won't sign," I said, without much firmness. "You conducted the interrogation improperly."

"All right then, let's begin it all over again!" Maliciously he compressed his lips. "We'll send you off to the place where we keep the Polizei."

He even stretched out his hand as though to take the file away from me. (At that point I held onto it.)

Somewhere outside the fifth-floor windows of the Lubyanka, the golden sunset sun glowed. Somewhere it was May. The office windows, like all the windows facing outward, were tightly closed and had not yet been unsealed after the winter—so that fresh air and the fragrance of things in bloom should not creep into those hidden rooms. The bronze clock on the mantel, from which the last rays of the sun had disappeared, quietly chimed.

Begin all over again? It seemed to me it would be easier to die than to begin all over again. Ahead of me loomed at least some kind of life. (If I had only known what kind!) And then what about that place where they kept the Polizei? And, in general, it was a bad idea to make him angry. It would influence the tone in which he phrased the conclusion of the indictment.

And so I signed. I signed it complete with Section 11, the significance of which I did not then know. They told me only that it would not add to my prison term. But because of that Section 11 I was later put into a hard-labor camp. Because of that Section 11 I was sent, even after "liberation," and without any additional sentence, into eternal exile.

Maybe it was all for the best. Without both those experiences, I would not have written this book.

My interrogator had used no methods on me other than sleeplessness, lies, and threats—all completely legal. Therefore, in the course of the "206" procedure, he didn't have to shove at me —as did interrogators who had made a mess of things and wanted to play safe—a document on nondisclosure for me to sign: that I, the undersigned, under pain of criminal penalty, swore never to

tell anyone about the methods used in conducting my interrogation. (No one knows, incidentally, what article of the Code this comes under.)

In several of the provincial administrations of the NKVD this measure was carried out in sequence: the typed statement on nondisclosure was shoved at a prisoner along with the verdict of the OSO. And later a similar document was shoved at prisoners being released from camp, whereby they guaranteed never to disclose to anyone the state of affairs in camp.

And so? Our habit of obedience, our bent (or broken) backbone, did not suffer us either to reject this gangster method of burying loose ends or even to be enraged by it.

We have lost *the measure of freedom*. We have no means of determining where it begins and where it ends. We are an Asiatic people. On and on and on they go, taking from us those endless pledges of nondisclosure—everyone not too lazy to ask for them.

By now we are even unsure whether we have the right to talk about the events of our own lives.

Chapter 4

■

The Bluecaps

Throughout the grinding of our souls in the gears of the great Nighttime Institution, when our souls are pulverized and our flesh hangs down in tatters like a beggar's rags, we suffer too much and are too immersed in our own pain to rivet with penetrating and far-seeing gaze those pale night executioners who torture us. A surfeit of inner grief floods our eyes. Otherwise what historians of our torturers we would be! For it is certain they will never describe themselves as they actually are. But alas! Every former prisoner remembers his own interrogation in detail, how they squeezed him, and what foulness they squeezed out of him —but often he does not even remember their names, let alone think about them as human beings. So it is with me. I can recall much more—and much more that's interesting—about any one of my cellmates than I can about Captain of State Security Yezepov, with whom I spent no little time face to face, the two of us alone in his office.

There is one thing, however, which remains with us all as an accurate, generalized recollection: foul rot—a space totally infected with putrefaction. And even when, decades later, we are long past fits of anger or outrage, in our own quieted hearts we retain this firm impression of low, malicious, impious, and, possibly, muddled people.

There is an interesting story about Alexander II, the Tsar surrounded by revolutionaries, who were to make seven attempts on his life. He once visited the House of Preliminary Detention on Shpalernaya—the uncle of the Big House—where he ordered them to lock him up in solitary-confinement cell No. 227. He

stayed in it for more than an hour, attempting thereby to sense the state of mind of those he had imprisoned there.

One cannot but admit that for a monarch this was evidence of moral aspiration, to feel the need and make the effort to take a spiritual view of the matter.

But it is impossible to picture any of our interrogators, right up to Abakumov and Beria, wanting to slip into a prisoner's skin even for one hour, or feeling compelled to sit and meditate in solitary confinement.

Their branch of service does not require them to be educated people of broad culture and broad views—and they are not. Their branch of service does not require them to think logically—and they do not. Their branch of service requires only that they carry out orders exactly and be impervious to suffering—and that is what they do and what they are. We who have passed through their hands feel suffocated when we think of that legion, which is stripped bare of universal human ideals.

Although others might not be aware of it, it was clear to the interrogators at least that the *cases* were fabricated. Except at staff conferences, they could not seriously say to one another or to themselves that they were exposing criminals. Nonetheless they kept right on producing depositions page after page to make sure that we rotted. So the essence of it all turns out to be the credo of the blatnye—the underworld of Russian thieves: "You today; me tomorrow."

They understood that the cases were fabricated, yet they kept on working year after year. How could they? Either they forced themselves *not to think* (and this in itself means the ruin of a human being), and simply accepted that this was the way it had to be and that the person who gave them their orders was always right . . .

But didn't the Nazis, too, it comes to mind, argue that same way?[1]

1. There is no way of sidestepping this comparison: both the years and the methods coincide too closely. And the comparison occurred even more naturally to those who had passed through the hands of both the Gestapo and the MGB. One of these was Yevgeny Ivanovich Divnich, an émigré and preacher of Orthodox Christianity. The Gestapo accused him of Communist activities among Russian workers in Germany, and the MGB charged him with having ties to the international bourgeoisie. Divnich's verdict was unfavorable to the MGB. He was tortured by both, but the Gestapo was nonetheless trying to get at the truth, and when the accusation did not hold up, Divnich was released. The MGB wasn't interested in the truth and had no intention of letting anyone out of its grip once he was arrested.

Or else it was a matter of the Progressive Doctrine, the granite ideology. An interrogator in awful Orotukan—sent there to the Kolyma in 1938 as a penalty assignment—was so touched when M. Lurye, former director of the Krivoi Rog Industrial Complex, readily agreed to sign an indictment which meant a second camp term that he used the time they had thus saved to say: "You think we get any satisfaction from using *persuasion?*[2] We have to do what the Party demands of us. You are an old Party member. Tell me what would you do in my place?" Apparently Lurye nearly agreed with him, and it may have been the fact that he had already been thinking in some such terms that led him to sign so readily. It is after all a convincing argument.

But most often it was merely a matter of cynicism. The bluecaps understood the workings of the meat grinder and loved it. In the Dzhida camps in 1944, interrogator Mironenko said to the condemned Babich with pride in his faultless logic: "Interrogation and trial are merely judicial corroboration. They cannot alter your fate, which was *previously* decided. If it is necessary to shoot you, then you will be shot even if you are altogether innocent. If it is necessary to acquit you,[3] then no matter how guilty you are you will be cleared and acquitted." Kushnaryev, Chief of the First Investigation Department of the West Kazakhstan Provincial State Security Administration, laid it on the line in just that way to Adolf Tsivilko. "After all, we're not going to let you out if you're a Leningrader!" (In other words, a Communist Party member with seniority.)

"Just give us a person—and we'll create the *case!*" That was what many of them said jokingly, and it was their slogan. What we think of as torture they think of as good work. The wife of the interrogator Nikolai Grabishchenko (the Volga Canal Project) said touchingly to her neighbors: "Kolya is a very good worker. One of them didn't confess for a long time—and they gave him to Kolya. Kolya talked with him for one night and he confessed."

What prompted them all to slip into harness and pursue so zealously not truth but *totals* of the processed and condemned? Because it was *most comfortable* for them not to be different from the others. And because these totals meant an easy life, supple-

2. An affectionate term for *torture.*
3. This evidently refers to *their own people.*

mentary pay, awards and decorations, promotions in rank, and the expansion and prosperity of the *Organs* themselves. If they ran up high totals, they could loaf when they felt like it, or do poor work or go out and enjoy themselves at night. And that is just what they did. Low totals led to their being kicked out, to the loss of their feedbag. For Stalin could never be convinced that in any district, or city, or military unit, he might suddenly cease to have enemies.

That was why they felt no mercy, but, instead, an explosion of resentment and rage toward those maliciously stubborn prisoners who opposed being fitted into the totals, who would not capitulate to sleeplessness or the punishment cell or hunger. By refusing to confess they menaced the interrogator's personal standing. It was as though they wanted to bring *him* down. In such circumstances all measures were justified! If it's to be war, then war it will be! We'll ram the tube down your throat—swallow that salt water!

Excluded by the nature of their work and by deliberate choice from the *higher* sphere of human existence, the servitors of the Blue Institution lived in their lower sphere with all the greater intensity and avidity. And there they were possessed and directed by the two strongest instincts of the lower sphere, other than hunger and sex: greed for *power* and greed for *gain*. (Particularly for power. In recent decades it has turned out to be more important than money.)

Power is a poison well known for thousands of years. If only no one were ever to acquire material power over others! But to the human being who has faith in some force that holds dominion over all of us, and who is therefore conscious of his own limitations, power is not necessarily fatal. For those, however, who are unaware of any higher sphere, it is a deadly poison. For them there is no antidote.

Remember what Tolstoi said about power? Ivan Ilyich had accepted an official position which gave him authority to *destroy any person he wanted to! All* without exception *were in his hands, and anyone, even the most important, could be brought before him as an accused.* (And that is just where our blueboys are! There is nothing to add to the description.) The consciousness of this power (and "the possibilities of using it mercifully"—so Tolstoi qualifies the situation, but this does not in any way apply

to our boys) constituted for Ivan Ilyich *the chief interest and attraction of the service.*

But attraction is not the right word—it is *intoxication!* After all, it *is* intoxicating. You are still young—still, shall we say parenthetically, a sniveling youth. Only a little while ago your parents were deeply concerned about you and didn't know where to turn to launch you in life. You were such a fool you didn't even want to study, but you got through three years of *that* school—and then how you took off and flew! How your situation changed! How your gestures changed, your glance, the turn of your head! The learned council of the scientific institute is in session. You enter and everyone notices you and trembles. You don't take the chairman's chair. Those headaches are for the rector to take on. You sit off to one side, but everyone understands that you are head man there. You are the Special Department. And you can sit there for just five minutes and then leave. You have that advantage over the professors. You can be called away by more important business—but later on, when you're considering their decision, you will raise your eyebrows or, better still, purse your lips and say to the rector: "You can't do that. There are *special considerations* involved." That's all! And it won't be done. Or else you are an osobist—a State Security representative in the army—a SMERSH man, and a mere lieutenant; but the portly old colonel, the commander of the unit, stands up when you enter the room and tries to flatter you, to play up to you. He doesn't even have a drink with his chief of staff without inviting you to join them. The fact that you have only two tiny stars on your shoulder boards doesn't mean a thing; it is even amusing. After all, your stars have a very different weight and are measured on a totally different scale from those of ordinary officers. (On special assignments you are sometimes even authorized to wear major's insignia, for example, which is a sort of incognito, a convention.) You have a power over all the people in that military unit, or factory, or district, incomparably greater than that of the military commander, or factory director, or secretary of the district Communist Party. These men control people's military or official duties, wages, reputations, but you control people's freedom. And no one dares speak about you at meetings, and no one will ever dare write about you in the newspaper—not only something bad but anything *good!* They don't dare. Your name, like that of a jealously guarded deity, cannot

even be mentioned. You are there; everyone feels your presence; but it's as though you didn't exist. From the moment you don that heavenly blue service cap, you stand higher than the publicly acknowledged power. No one dares check up on what *you* do. But no one is exempt from your checking up on him. And therefore, in dealing with ordinary so-called citizens, who for you are mere blocks of wood, it is altogether appropriate for you to wear an ambiguous and deeply thoughtful expression. For, of course, you are the one—and no one else—who knows about the *special considerations*. And therefore you are always right.

There is just one thing you must never forget. You, too, would have been just such a poor block of wood if you had not had the luck to become one of the little links in the *Organs*—that flexible, unitary organism inhabiting a nation as a tapeworm inhabits a human body. Everything is yours now! Everything is for you! Just be true to the *Organs!* They will always stand up for you! They will help you swallow up anyone who bothers you! They will help move every obstacle from your path! But—be true to the *Organs!* Do everything they order you to! They will do the thinking for you in respect to your functions too: today you serve in a special unit; tomorrow you will sit in an interrogator's armchair; and then perhaps you will travel to Lake Seliger as a folklorist,[4] partly, it may be, to get your nerves straightened out. And next you may be sent from a city where you are too well known to the opposite end of the country as a Plenipotentiary in Charge of Church Affairs.[5] Or perhaps you will become Executive Secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers.[6] Be surprised at nothing. People's true appointments and true ranks are known only to the *Organs*. The rest is merely play-acting. Some Honored Artist or other, or Hero of Socialist Agriculture, is here today, and tomorrow, puff! he's gone.[7]

The duties of an interrogator require work, of course: you have

4. Ilin in 1931.

5. The violent Yaroslavl interrogator Volkopyalov, appointed Plenipotentiary in Charge of Church Affairs in Moldavia.

6. Another Ilin—this one Viktor Nikolayevich, a former lieutenant general of State Security.

7. "Who are you?" asked General Serov in Berlin of the world-renowned biologist Timofeyev-Ressovsky, offensively using the familiar form of address. And the scientist, who was undismayed and who possessed a Cossack's hereditary daring, replied, using the same familiar form: "And who are you?" Serov corrected himself and, this time using the formal and correct form, asked: "Are you a scientist?"

to come in during the day, at night, sit for hours and hours—but not split your skull over "proof." (Let the prisoner's head ache over that.) And you don't have to worry whether the prisoner is guilty or not but simply do what the *Organs* require. And everything will be all right. It will be up to you to make the interrogation periods pass as pleasurably as possible and not to get overly fatigued. And it would be nice to get some good out of it—at least to amuse yourself. You have been sitting a long time, and all of a sudden a new method of *persuasion* occurs to you! Eureka! So you call up your friends on the phone, and you go around to other offices and tell them about it—what a laugh! Who shall we try it on, boys? It's really pretty monotonous to keep doing the same thing all the time. Those trembling hands, those imploring eyes, that cowardly submissiveness—they are really a bore. If you could just get one of them to resist! "I love strong opponents! *It's such fun to break their backs!*" said the Leningrad interrogator Shitov to G. G——v.

And if your opponent is so strong that he refuses to give in, all your methods have failed, and you are in a rage? Then don't control your fury! It's tremendously satisfying, that outburst! Let your anger have its way; don't set any bounds to it! Don't hold yourself back! That's when interrogators spit in the open mouth of the accused! And shove his face into a full cuspidor![8] That's the state of mind in which they drag priests around by their long hair! Or urinate in a kneeling prisoner's face! After such a storm of fury you feel yourself a real honest-to-God man!

Or else you are interrogating a "foreigner's girl friend."[9] So you curse her out and then you say: "Come on now, does an American have a special kind of ———? Is that it? Weren't there enough Russian ones for you?" And all of a sudden you get an idea: maybe she learned something from those foreigners. Here's a chance not to be missed, like an assignment abroad! And so you begin to interrogate her energetically: *How?* What positions? More! In detail! Every scrap of information! (You can use the information yourself, and you can tell the other boys too!) The girl is blushing all over and in tears. "It doesn't have anything to do with the case," she protests. "Yes, it does, speak up!" That's

8. As happened with Vasilyev, according to Ivanov-Razumnik.
9. Esfir R., 1947.

power for you! She gives you the full details. If you want, she'll draw a picture for you. If you want, she'll demonstrate with her body. She has no way out. In your hands you hold the punishment cell and her *prison term.*

And if you have asked for a stenographer[10] to take down the questions and answers, and they send in a pretty one, you can shove your paw down into her bosom right in front of the boy being interrogated.[11] He's not a human being after all, and there is no reason to feel shy in his presence.

In fact, there's no reason for you to feel shy with anyone. And if you like the broads—and who doesn't?—you'd be a fool not to make use of your position. Some will be drawn to you because of your power, and others will give in out of fear. So you've met a girl somewhere and she's caught your eye? She'll belong to you, never fear; she can't get away! Someone else's wife has caught your eye? She'll be yours too! Because, after all, there's no problem about removing the husband.[12] No, indeed! To know what it meant to be a bluecap one had to experience it! Anything you saw was yours! Any apartment you looked at was yours! Any woman was yours! Any enemy was struck from your path! The

10. Interrogator Pokhilko, Kemerovo State Security Administration.

11. The schoolboy Misha B.

12. For a long time I've been hanging on to a theme for a story to be called "The Spoiled Wife." But it looks as though I will never get the chance to write it, so here it is. In a certain Far Eastern aviation unit before the Korean War, a certain lieutenant colonel returned from an assignment to find his wife in a hospital. The doctors did not hide the truth from him: her sexual organs had been injured by perverted sexual practices. The lieutenant colonel got in to see his wife and wrung from her the admission that the man responsible was the osobist in their unit, a senior lieutenant. (It would seem, by the way, that this incident had not occurred without some cooperation on her part.) In a rage the lieutenant colonel ran to the osobist's office, took out his pistol, and threatened to kill him. But the senior lieutenant very quickly forced him to back down and leave the office defeated and pitiful. He threatened to send the lieutenant colonel to rot in the most horrible of camps, where he'd pray to be released from life without further torment, and he *ordered* him to take his wife back just as he found her—with an injury that was to some extent incurable—and to live with her, not to dare get a divorce, and not to dare complain. And all this was the price for not being arrested! The lieutenant colonel did just as he was ordered. (I was told the story by the osobist's chauffeur.)

There must have been many such cases, because the abuse of power was particularly attractive in this area. In 1944, another gaybist—State Security officer—forced the daughter of an army general to marry him by threatening to arrest her father. The girl had a fiancé, but to save her father she married the gaybist. She kept a diary during her brief marriage, gave it to her true love, and then committed suicide.

earth beneath your feet was yours! The heaven above you was yours—it was, after all, like your cap, sky blue!

The passion for gain was their universal passion. After all, in the absence of any checking up, such power was inevitably used for personal enrichment. One would have had to be *holy* to refrain!

If we were able to discover the hidden motivation behind individual arrests, we would be astounded to find that, granted the rules governing *arrests* in general, 75 percent of the time the particular choice of *whom* to arrest, the personal cast of the die, was determined by human greed and vengefulness; and of that 75 percent, half were the result of material self-interest on the part of the local NKVD (and, of course, the prosecutor too, for on this point I do not distinguish between them).

How, for example, did V. G. Vlasov's nineteen-year-long journey through the Archipelago begin? As head of the District Consumer Cooperatives he arranged a sale of textiles for the activists of the local Party organization. (These materials were of a sort and quality which no one nowadays would even touch.) No one was bothered, of course, by the fact that this sale was not open to the general public. But the prosecutor's wife was unable to buy any: She wasn't there at the time; Prosecutor Rusov himself had been shy about approaching the counter; and Vlasov hadn't thought to say: "I'll set some aside for you." (In fact, given his character, he would never have said this anyway.) Furthermore, Prosecutor Rusov had invited a friend to dine in the restricted Party dining room—such restricted dining rooms used to exist in the thirties. This friend of his was not high enough in rank to be admitted there, and the dining room manager refused to serve him. The prosecutor demanded that Vlasov punish the manager, and Vlasov refused. Vlasov also managed to insult the district NKVD, and just as painfully. And he was therefore added to the rightist opposition.

The motivations and actions of the bluecaps are sometimes so petty that one can only be astounded. Security officer Senchenko took a map case and dispatch case from an officer he'd arrested and started to use them right in his presence, and, by manipulating the documentation, he took a pair of foreign gloves from

another prisoner. (When the armies were advancing, the bluecaps were especially irritated because they got only second pick of the booty.) The counterintelligence officer of the Forty-ninth Army who arrested me had a yen for my cigarette case—and it wasn't even a cigarette case but a small German Army box, of a tempting scarlet, however. And because of that piece of shit he carried out a whole maneuver: As his first step, he omitted it from the list of belongings that were confiscated from me. ("You can keep it.") He thereupon ordered me to be searched again, knowing all the time that it was all I had in my pockets. "Aha! what's that? Take it away!" And to prevent my protests: "Put him in the punishment cell!" (What Tsarist gendarme would have dared behave that way toward a defender of the Fatherland?)

Every interrogator was given an allowance of a certain number of cigarettes to encourage those willing to confess and to reward stool pigeons. Some of them kept all the cigarettes for themselves.

Even in accounting for hours spent in interrogating, they used to cheat. They got higher pay for night work. And we used to note the way they wrote down more hours on the night interrogations than they really spent.

Interrogator Fyodorov (Reshety Station, P. O. Box No. 235) stole a wristwatch while searching the apartment of the free person Korzukhin. During the Leningrad blockade Interrogator Nikolai Fyodorovich Kruzhkov told Yelizaveta Viktorovna Strakhovich, wife of the prisoner he was interrogating, K. I. Strakhovich: "I want a quilt. Bring it to me!" When she replied: "All our warm things are in the room they've sealed," he went to her apartment and, without breaking the State Security seal on the lock, unscrewed the entire doorknob. "That's how the MGB works," he explained gaily. And he went in and began to collect the warm things, shoving some crystal in his pocket at the same time. She herself tried to get whatever she could out of the room, but he stopped her.[13] "That's enough for you!"—and he kept on raking in the booty.

13. In 1954, although her husband, who had forgiven them everything, including a death sentence that had been commuted, kept trying to persuade her not to pursue the matter, this energetic and implacable woman testified against Kruzhkov at a trial. Because this was not Kruzhkov's first offense, and because the interests of the *Organs* had been violated, he was given a twenty-five-year sentence. Has he really been in the jug that long?

There's no end to such cases. One could issue a thousand "White Papers" (and beginning in 1918 too). One would need only to question systematically former prisoners and their wives. Maybe there are and were bluecaps who never stole anything or appropriated anything for themselves—but I find it impossible to imagine one. I simply do not understand: given the bluecaps' philosophy of life, what was there to restrain them if they liked some particular thing? Way back at the beginning of the thirties, when all of us were marching around in the German uniforms of the Red Youth Front and were building the First Five-Year Plan, they were spending their evenings in salons like the one in the apartment of Konkordiya Iosse, behaving like members of the nobility or Westerners, and their lady friends were showing off their foreign clothes. Where were they getting those clothes?

Here are their family names—and one might almost think they were hired because of those names. For example, in the Kemerovo Provincial State Security Administration, there were: a prosecutor named *Trutnev,* "drone"; a chief of the interrogation section Major *Shkurkin,* "self-server"; his deputy, Lieutenant Colonel *Balandin,* "soupy"; and an interrogator *Skorokhvatov,* "quick-grabber." When all is said and done, one could not invent names more appropriate. And they were all right there together! (I need hardly bother to mention again Volkopyalov—"wolf-skin-stretcher"—or Grabishchenko—"plunderer.") Are we to assume that nothing at all is expressed in people's family names and such a concentration of them?

Again the prisoner's faulty memory. I. Korneyev has forgotten the name of the colonel of State Security who was also Konkordiya Iosse's friend (they both knew her, it turned out), who was in the Vladimir Detention Prison at the same time as Korneyev. This colonel was a living embodiment of the instincts for power and personal gain. At the beginning of 1945, during the height of the "war booty" period, he got himself assigned to that section of the *Organs,* headed by Abakumov himself, which was supposed to keep watch over the plundering—in other words, they tried to grab off as much as possible for themselves, not for the state. (And succeeded brilliantly.) Our hero pulled in whole freight car loads and built several dachas, one of them in Klin. After the war he operated on such a scale that when he arrived at the Novosibirsk Station he ordered all the customers

chased out of the station restaurant and had girls and women rounded up and forced to dance naked on the tables to entertain him and his drinking companions. He would have gotten away with this too, but he violated another important rule. Like Kruzhkov, he went against *his own kind*. Kruzhkov deceived the *Organs*. And this colonel did perhaps even worse. He laid bets on which wives he could seduce, and not just ordinary wives, but the wives of his colleagues in the Security police. And he was not forgiven! He was sentenced to a political prison under Article 58, and was serving out his time fuming at their having *dared* to arrest him. He had no doubt they would change their minds. (And perhaps they did.)

That dread fate—*to be thrown into prison* themselves—was not such a rarity for the bluecaps. There was no genuine insurance against it. But somehow these men were slow to sense the lessons of the past. Once again this was probably due to their having no higher powers of reason; their low-grade intellect would tell them: It happens only rarely; very few get caught; it may pass me by; my friends won't let me down.

Friends, as a matter of fact, did try not to leave their friends in a bad spot. They had their own unspoken understanding: at least to arrange favorable conditions for *friends*. (This was the case, for example, with Colonel I. Y. Vorobyev in the Marfino Special Prison, and with the same V. N. Ilin who was in the Lubyanka for more than eight years.) Thanks to this caste spirit, those arrested singly, as a result of only personal shortcomings, usually did not do too badly. And that was how they were able to justify their sense of immunity from punishment in their day-to-day work in the service. But there were several known cases when camp Security officers were tossed into ordinary camps to serve out their sentences. There were even instances when as prisoners they ran into zeks who had once been under their thumb and came off badly in the encounter. For example, Security officer Munshin, who cherished a particularly violent hatred toward the 58's in camp and had relied heavily on the support of the blatnye, the habitual thieves, was driven right under the board bunks by those very same thieves. However, we have no way to learn more details about these cases in order to be able to explain them.

But those gaybisty—the State Security officers—who got

caught in a *wave* were in very serious danger. (They had their own *waves!*) A wave is a natural catastrophe and is even more powerful than the *Organs* themselves. In this situation, no one was going to help anyone else lest he be drawn into the same abyss himself.

The possibility did exist, however, if you were well informed and had a sharp Chekist sensitivity, of getting yourself out from under the avalanche, even at the last minute, by proving that you had no connection with it. Thus it was that Captain Sayenko (not the Kharkov Chekist carpenter of 1918–1919, who was famous for executing prisoners with his pistol, punching holes in bodies with his saber, breaking shinbones in two, flattening heads with weights, and branding people with hot irons,[14] but, perhaps, a relative) was weak enough to marry for love an ex-employee of the Chinese Eastern Railroad named Kokhanskaya. And suddenly he found out, right at the beginning of the wave, that all the Chinese Eastern Railroad people were going to be arrested. At this time he was head of the Security Operations Department of the Archangel GPU. He acted without losing a moment. How? He *arrested his own beloved wife!* And not on the basis of her being one of the Chinese Eastern Railroad people—but on the basis of a case he himself cooked up. Not only did he save himself, but he moved up and became the Chief of the Tomsk Province NKVD.[15]

The *waves* were generated by the *Organs'* hidden law of *self-renewal*—a small periodic ritual sacrifice so that the rest could take on the appearance of being purified. The *Organs* had to change personnel faster than the normal rate of human growth and aging would ensure. Driven by that same implacable urgency that forces the sturgeon to swim upriver and perish in the shallows, to be replaced by schools of small fry, a certain number of "schools" of gaybisty had to sacrifice themselves. This law was easily apparent to a higher intelligence, but the bluecaps themselves did not want to accept the fact of its existence and make provision for it. Yet, at the hour appointed in their stars, the kings of the *Organs,* the aces of the *Organs,* and even the ministers themselves laid their heads down beneath their own guillotine.

14. Roman Gul, *Dzerzhinsky. Menzhinsky—Peters—Latsis—Yagoda,* Paris, 1936.

15. This, too, is a theme for a story—and how many more there are in this field! Maybe someone will make use of them someday.

Yagoda took one such school of fish along with him. No doubt many of those whose glorious names we shall come to admire when we come to the White Sea Canal were taken in this school and their names thenceforward expunged from the poetic eulogies.

Very shortly, a second school accompanied the short-lived Yezhov. Some of the finest cavaliers of 1937 vanished in this one. (Yet one ought not to exaggerate their number. It did not by any means include all the best.) Yezhov himself was beaten during his interrogation. He was pitiful. And Gulag was orphaned during this wave of arrests. For example, arrested with Yezhov were the Chief of the Financial Administration of Gulag, the Chief of the Medical Administration of Gulag, the Chief of the Guard Service of Gulag (VOKhR),[16] and even the Chief of the Security Operations Department of Gulag, who oversaw the work of the camp "godfathers."

And later there was the school of Beria.

The corpulent, conceited Abakumov had fallen earlier, separately.

Someday—if the archives are not destroyed—the historians of the *Organs* will recount all this step by step, with all the figures and all the glittering names.

Therefore, I am going to write only briefly about Ryumin and Abakumov, a story I learned only by chance. I will not repeat what I have already written about them in *The First Circle.*

Ryumin had been raised to the heights by Abakumov and was very close to him. At the end of 1952, he came to Abakumov with the sensational report that Professor Etinger, a physician, had confessed to intentional malpractice when treating Zhdanov and Shcherbakov, with the purpose of killing them. Abakumov refused to believe him. He knew the whole cookery and decided Ryumin was getting too big for his britches. (But Ryumin had a better idea of what Stalin wanted!) To verify the story, they arranged to cross-question Etinger that very evening. But each of them drew different conclusions from his testimony. Abakumov concluded that there was no such thing as a "doctors' case." And Ryumin concluded that there was. A second attempt at verification was to take place the following morning, but, thanks to the miraculous attributes of the Nighttime Institution, *Etinger died*

16. VOKhR: Militarized Guard Service, formerly the Internal Guard Service of the Republic.

that very night! In the morning, Ryumin, bypassing Abakumov and without his knowledge, telephoned the Central Committee and asked for an appointment with Stalin! (My own opinion, however, is that this was not his most decisive step. Ryumin's decisive action, following which his life hung in the balance, was in not going along with Abakumov earlier. And perhaps in having Etinger killed that same night. Who knows the secrets of those *courtyards!* Had Ryumin's contact with Stalin begun earlier perhaps?) Stalin received Ryumin, set in motion the "doctors' case" and *arrested Abakumov*. From that point on it would seem that Ryumin conducted the "doctors' case" independently of and even despite Beria! There were signs before Stalin's death that Beria was in danger—and perhaps it was he who arranged to have Stalin done away with. One of the first acts of the new government was to dismiss the "doctors' case." At that time *Ryumin was arrested* (while Beria was still in power), but *Abakumov was not released!* At the Lubyanka a new order of things was introduced. And for the first time in its entire existence a prosecutor crossed its threshold—D. Terekhov. Imprisoned, Ryumin was fidgety and subservient: "I am not guilty. I am here for no reason." He asked to be interrogated. As was his custom, he was sucking a hard candy at the time, and when Terekhov rebuked him for it, he spat it out on the palm of his hand. "Pardon me." As we have already reported, Abakumov roared with laughter: "Hocus-pocus!" Terekhov showed him the document authorizing him to inspect the Internal Prison of the Ministry of State Security. Abakumov brushed it away: "You can forge five hundred of those!" As an organizational "patriot," he was principally offended not by being in prison but by this encroachment on the power of the *Organs,* which could not be subordinate to anything in the world! In July, 1953, Ryumin was tried in Moscow and shot. And Abakumov remained in prison! During one interrogation he said to Terekhov: "Your eyes are too beautiful. *I am going to be sorry to have to shoot you!*[17] Leave my case alone. Leave it while you still have time." On another occasion Terekhov

17. This is true. On the whole, D. Terekhov is a man of uncommon strength of will and courage (which were what was required in bringing the big Stalinists to justice in an uneasy situation). And he evidently has a lively mind as well. If Khrushchev's reforms had been more thoroughgoing and consistent, Terekhov might have excelled in carrying them out. That is how historic leaders fail to materialize in our country.

called him in and handed him the newspaper which carried the announcement of Beria's exposure. At the time this was virtually a cosmic upheaval. Abakumov read it and, with not so much as the twitch of an eyebrow, he turned the page and started to read the sports news! On another occasion, during an interrogation in the presence of a high-ranking gaybist who had, in the recent past, been his subordinate, Abakumov asked him: "How could you have permitted the investigation of the Beria case to be conducted by the prosecutor's office instead of by the MGB?" (Everything in his own domain kept nagging him.) He went on: "Do you really believe they are going to put me, the Minister of State Security, on trial?" The answer was "Yes." And he replied: "Then put on your *top hat!* The *Organs* are finished!" (He was, of course, too pessimistic, uneducated courier that he was.) But when he was in the Lubyanka, Abakumov was not afraid of being tried; he was afraid of being poisoned. (This, too, showed what a worthy son of the *Organs* he was!) He started to reject the prison food altogether and would eat only eggs that he bought from the prison store. (In this case, he simply lacked technical imagination. He thought one couldn't poison eggs.) The only books he borrowed from the well-stocked Lubyanka library were the works of, believe it or not, Stalin! (Who had imprisoned him.) But in all likelihood this was for show rather than the result of any calculation that Stalin's adherents would gain power. He spent two years in prison. Why didn't they release him? The question is not a naïve one. In terms of his crimes against humanity, he was over his head in blood. But he was not the only one! And all the others came out of it safe and sound. There is some hidden secret here too: there is a vague rumor that in his time he had personally beaten Khrushchev's daughter-in-law Lyuba Sedykh, the wife of Khrushchev's older son, who had been condemned to a punishment battalion in Stalin's time and who died as a result. And, so goes the rumor, this was why, having been imprisoned by Stalin, he was tried—in Leningrad—under Khrushchev and shot on December 18, 1954.[18] But Abakumov had no real reason to be depressed: the *Organs* still didn't perish because of that.

18. Here is one more of his eccentricities as a VIP: he used to change into civilian clothes and walk around Moscow with Kuznetsov, the head of his bodyguard, and whenever he felt like it, he would hand out money from the Cheka operations funds. Does not this smell of Old Russia—charity for the sake of one's soul?

■

As the folk saying goes: *If you speak for the wolf, speak against him as well.*

Where did this wolf-tribe appear from among our people? Does it really stem from our own roots? Our own blood?

It is our own.

And just so we don't go around flaunting too proudly the white mantle of the just, let everyone ask himself: "If my life had turned out differently, might I myself not have become just such an executioner?"

It is a dreadful question if one really answers it honestly.

I remember my third year at the university, in the fall of 1938. We young men of the Komsomol were summoned before the District Komsomol Committee not once but twice. Scarcely bothering to ask our consent, they shoved an application form at us: You've had enough physics, mathematics, and chemistry; it's more important to your country for you to enter the NKVD school. (That's the way it always is. It isn't just some person who needs you; it is always your Motherland. And it is always some official or other who speaks on behalf of your Motherland and who knows what she needs.)

One year before, the District Committee had conducted a drive among us to recruit candidates for the air force schools. We avoided getting involved that time too, because we didn't want to leave the university—but we didn't sidestep recruitment then as stubbornly as we did this time.

Twenty-five years later we could think: Well, yes, we understood the sort of arrests that were being made at the time, and the fact that they were torturing people in prisons, and the slime they were trying to drag us into. But it isn't true! After all, the Black Marias were going through the streets at night, and we were the same young people who were parading with banners during the day. How could we know anything about those arrests and why should we think about them? All the provincial leaders had been removed, but as far as we were concerned it didn't matter. Two or three professors had been arrested, but after all they hadn't been our dancing partners, and it might even be easier

to pass our exams as a result. Twenty-year-olds, we marched in the ranks of those born the year the Revolution took place, and because we were the same age as the Revolution, the brightest of futures lay ahead.

It would be hard to identify the exact source of that inner intuition, not founded on rational argument, which prompted our refusal to enter the NKVD schools. It certainly didn't derive from the lectures on historical materialism we listened to: it was clear from them that the struggle against the internal enemy was a crucial battlefront, and to share in it was an honorable task. Our decision even ran counter to our material interests: at that time the provincial university we attended could not promise us anything more than the chance to teach in a rural school in a remote area for miserly wages. The NKVD school dangled before us special rations and double or triple pay. Our feelings could not be put into words—and even if we had found the words, fear would have prevented our speaking them aloud to one another. It was not our minds that resisted but something inside our breasts. People can shout at you from all sides: "You must!" And your own head can be saying also: "You must!" But inside your breast there is a sense of revulsion, repudiation. I don't want to. *It makes me feel sick.* Do what you want without me; I want no part of it.

This came from very far back, quite likely as far back as Lermontov, from those decades of Russian life when frankly and openly there was no worse and no more vile branch of the service for a decent person than that of the gendarmerie. No, it went back even further. Without even knowing it ourselves, we were ransomed by the small change in copper that was left from the golden coins our great-grandfathers had expended, at a time when morality was not considered relative and when the distinction between good and evil was very simply perceived by the heart.

Still, some of us were recruited at that time, and I think that if they had really put the pressure on, they could have broken everybody's resistance. So I would like to imagine: if, by the time war broke out, I had already been wearing an NKVD officer's insignia on my blue tabs, what would I have become? Nowadays, of course, I can console myself by saying that my heart wouldn't have stood it, that I would have objected and at some point slammed the door. But later, lying on a prison bunk, I began to

look back over my actual career as an officer and I was horrified.

I did not move in one stride from being a student worn out by mathematics to officer's rank. Before becoming an officer I spent a half-year as a downtrodden soldier. And one might think I would have gotten through my thick skull what it was like always to obey people who were perhaps not worthy of your obedience and to do it on a hungry stomach to boot. Then for another half-year they tore me to pieces in officer candidate school. So I ought to have grasped, once and for all, the bitterness of service as a rank-and-file soldier and remembered how my hide froze and how it was flayed from my body. But did I? Not at all. For consolation, they pinned two little stars on my shoulder boards, and then a third, and then a fourth. And I forgot every bit of what it had been like!

Had I at least kept my student's love of freedom? But, you see, we had never had any such thing. Instead, we loved forming up, we loved marches.

I remember very well that right after officer candidate school I experienced the *happiness of simplification,* of being a military man and *not having to think things through; the happiness of being immersed* in the life *everyone else lived,* that was *accepted* in our military milieu; the happiness of forgetting some of the spiritual subtleties inculcated since childhood.

We were constantly hungry in that school and kept looking around to see where we could grab an extra bite, and we watched one another enviously to see who was the cleverest. But most of all we were afraid we wouldn't manage to stay in until the time came to graduate and receive our officer's insignia. (They sent those who failed to the battle for Stalingrad.) And they trained us like young beasts, so as to infuriate us to the point where we would later want to take it out on someone else. We never got enough sleep because after taps, as punishment, we might be forced to go through the drill alone under the eyes of a sergeant. Or the entire squad might be routed out at night and made to form up because of one uncleaned boot: there he is, the bastard, and he'll keep on cleaning it, and until he gets a shine on it you're all going to stay standing there.

In passionate anticipation of those insignia, we developed a tigerlike stride and a metallic voice of command.

Then the officer's stars were fastened on our tabs. And only one month later, forming up my battery in the rear, I ordered a careless soldier named Berbenyev to march up and down after taps under the eyes of my insubordinate Sergeant Metlin. (And do you know, I had *forgotten* all about it until now. I honestly forgot about it for years! Only now, seated in front of this sheet of paper, have I remembered.) Some elderly colonel, who was an inspector, happened to be there, and he called me in and put me to shame. And I (and this after I'd left the university!) tried to justify my action on the grounds that it was what we had been taught in school. In other words, I meant: What humane views can there be, given the fact that we are in the army?

(And the more so in the *Organs*.)

Pride grows in the human heart like lard on a pig.

I tossed out orders to my subordinates that I would not allow them to question, convinced that no orders could be wiser. Even at the front, where, one might have thought, death made equals of us all, my power soon convinced me that I was a superior human being. Seated there, I heard them out as they stood at attention. I interrupted them. I issued commands. I addressed fathers and grandfathers with the familiar, downgrading form of address—while they, of course, addressed me formally. I sent them out to repair wires under shellfire so that my superiors should not reproach me. (Andreyashin died that way.) I ate my officer's ration of butter with rolls, without giving a thought as to why I had a right to it, and why the rank-and-file soldiers did not. I, of course, had a personal servant assigned to me—in polite terms, an "orderly"—whom I badgered one way or another and ordered to look after my person and prepare my meals separately from the soldiers'. (After all, the Lubyanka interrogators don't have orderlies—that's one thing you can't say about them.) I forced my soldiers to put their backs into it and dig me a special dugout at every new bivouac and to haul the heaviest beams to support it so that I should be as comfortable and safe as possible. And wait a minute, yes, my battery always had a guardhouse too. What kind of guardhouse could there be in the woods? It was a pit, of course, although a better one than those at the Gorokhovets division camps which I have described, because it had a roof and the man confined got a soldier's ration. Vyushkov was imprisoned

there for losing his horse and Popkov for maltreating his carbine. Yes, just a moment, I can remember more. They sewed me a map case out of German hide—not human, but from a car seat. But I didn't have a strap for it, and I was unhappy about that. Then all of a sudden they saw some partisan commissar, from the local District Party Committee, wearing just the right kind of strap—and they took it away from him: we are the army; we have seniority! (Remember Senchenko, the Security officer, who stole a map case and a dispatch case?) Finally, I coveted that scarlet box, and I remember how they took it away and got it for me.

That's what shoulder boards do to a human being. And where have all the exhortations of grandmother, standing before an ikon, gone! And where the young Pioneer's daydreams of future sacred Equality!

And at the moment when my life was turned upside down and the SMERSH officers at the brigade command point tore off those cursed shoulder boards, and took my belt away and shoved me along to their automobile, I was pierced to the quick by worrying how, in my stripped and sorry state, I was going to make my way through the telephone operator's room. The rank and file must not see me in that condition!

The day after my arrest my march of penance began: the most recent "catch" was always sent from the army counterintelligence center to the counterintelligence headquarters of the front. They herded us on foot from Osterode to Brodnica.

When they led me out of the punishment cell, there were already seven prisoners there in three and a half pairs standing with their backs to me. Six of them had on well-worn Russian Army overcoats which had been around for a long time, and on their backs had been painted, in indelible white paint, "SU," meaning "Soviet Union." I already knew that mark, having seen it more than once on the backs of our Russian POW's as they wandered sadly and guiltily toward the army that was approaching to *free* them. They had been freed, but there was no shared happiness in that liberation. Their compatriots glowered at them even more grimly than at the Germans. And as soon as they crossed the front lines, they were arrested and imprisoned.

The seventh prisoner was a German civilian in a black three-

piece suit, a black overcoat, and black hat. He was over fifty, tall, well groomed, and his white face had been nurtured on gentleman's food.

I completed the fourth pair, and the Tatar sergeant, chief of the convoy, gestured to me to pick up my sealed suitcase, which stood off to one side. It contained my officer's equipment as well as all the papers which had been seized as evidence when I was arrested.

What did he mean, carry my suitcase? He, a sergeant, wanted me, an officer, to pick up my suitcase and carry it? A large, heavy object? Despite the new regulations? While beside me six men *from the ranks* would be marching empty-handed? And one representative of a conquered nation?

I did not express this whole complex set of ideas to the sergeant. I merely said: "I am an officer. Let the German carry it."

None of the prisoners turned around at my words: turning around was forbidden. Only my mate in the fourth pair, also an "SU," looked at me in astonishment. (When he had been captured, our army wasn't yet like that.)

But the sergeant from counterintelligence was not surprised. Even though I was not, of course, an officer in his eyes, still his indoctrination and mine coincided. He summoned the innocent German and ordered him to carry the suitcase. It was just as well the latter had not understood our conversation.

The rest of us put our hands behind our backs. The former POW's did not have even one bag among them. They had left the Motherland with empty hands and that is exactly how they returned to her. So our column marched off, four pairs in file. We did not converse with our convoy. And it was absolutely forbidden to talk among ourselves whether on the march, during a halt, or at overnight stops. As accused prisoners we were required to move as though separated by invisible partitions, as though suffocated, each in his own solitary-confinement cell.

The early spring weather was changeable. At times a thin mist hung in the air, and even on the firm highway the liquid mud squelched dismally beneath our boots. At times the heavens cleared and the soft yellow sun, still uncertain of its talent, warmed the already thawing hillocks and showed us with perfect

clarity the world we were about to leave. At times a hostile squall flew to the attack and tore from the black clouds a snow that was not really even white, which beat icily on faces and backs and feet, soaking through our overcoats and our footcloths.

Six backs ahead of me, six constant backs. There was more than enough time to examine and re-examine the crooked, hideous brands "SU" and the shiny black cloth on the German's back. There was more than enough time to reconsider my former life and to comprehend my present one. But I couldn't. I had been smashed on the head with an oak club—but I still didn't comprehend.

Six backs! There was neither approval nor condemnation in their swing.

The German soon tired. He shifted the suitcase from hand to hand, grabbed at his heart, made signs to the convoy that he couldn't carry it any further. At that point his neighbor in the pair, a POW who only a little while before had experienced God knows what in German captivity (but, perhaps, mercy too), took the suitcase of his own free will and carried it.

After that the other POW's carried it in turn, also without being ordered to; and then the German again.

All but me.

And no one said a word to me.

At one point we met a long string of empty carts. The drivers studied us with interest, and some of them jumped up to full height on top of the carts and stared. I understood very quickly that their stares and their malice were directed toward me. I was very sharply set off from the others: my coat was new, long, and cut to fit my figure snugly. My tabs had not yet been torn off, and in the filtered sunlight my buttons, also not cut off, burned with the glitter of cheap gold. It was easy to see I was an officer, with a look of newness, too, and newly taken into custody. Perhaps this very fall from the heights stimulated them and gave them pleasure, suggesting some gleam of justice, but more likely they could not get it into their heads, stuffed with political indoctrination, that one of their own company commanders could be arrested in this way, and they all decided unanimously I had come from the *other* side.

"Aha, the Vlasov bastard got caught, did he! Shoot the rat!"

They were vehement in their rear-line wrath (the most intense patriotism always flourishes in the rear), and they added a good deal more in mother oaths.

They regarded me as some kind of international operator who had, nonetheless, been caught—and as a result the advance at the front would move along faster and the war would come to an end sooner.

How was I to answer them? I was forbidden to utter a single word, and I would have had to explain my entire life to each and every one of them. What could I do to make them understand that I was not a spy, a saboteur? That I was their friend? That it was because of them that I was here? I smiled. Looking up at them, I smiled at them from a column of prisoners under escort! But my bared teeth seemed to them the worst kind of mockery, and they shook their fists and bellowed insults at me even more violently than before.

I smiled in pride that I had been arrested not for stealing, nor treason, nor desertion, but because I had discovered through my power of reasoning the evil secrets of Stalin. I smiled at the thought that I wanted, and might still be able, to effect some small remedies and changes in our Russian way of life.

But all that time my suitcase was being carried by others.

And I didn't even feel remorseful about it! And if my neighbor, whose sunken cheeks were already covered with a soft two-week growth of beard and whose eyes were filled to overflowing with suffering and knowledge, had then and there reproached me in the clearest of clear Russian words for having disgraced the honor of a prisoner by appealing to the convoy for help and had accused me of haughtiness, of setting myself above the rest of them, I would *not have understood* him! I simply would not have understood *what he was talking about.* I was an officer!

And if seven of us had to die on the way, and the eighth could have been saved by the convoy, what was to keep me from crying out: "Sergeant! Save *me.* I am an officer!"

And that's what an officer is even when his shoulder boards aren't blue!

And if they are blue? If he has been indoctrinated to believe that even among other officers he is the salt of the earth? And that he knows more than others and is entrusted with more res-

ponsibility than others and that, consequently, it is his duty to force a prisoner's head between his legs, and then to shove him like that into a pipe . . .

Why shouldn't he?

I credited myself with unselfish dedication. But meanwhile I had been thoroughly prepared to be an executioner. And if I had gotten into an NKVD school under Yezhov, maybe I would have matured just in time for Beria.

So let the reader who expects this book to be a political exposé slam its covers shut right now.

If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?

During the life of any heart this line keeps changing place; sometimes it is squeezed one way by exuberant evil and sometimes it shifts to allow enough space for good to flourish. One and the same human being is, at various ages, under various circumstances, a totally different human being. At times he is close to being a devil, at times to sainthood. But his name doesn't change, and to that name we ascribe the whole lot, good and evil.

Socrates taught us: *Know thyself!*

Confronted by the pit into which we are about to toss those who have done us harm, we halt, stricken dumb: it is after all only because of the way things worked out that they were the executioners and we weren't.

If Malyuta Skuratov had summoned *us*, we, too, probably would have done our work well!

From good to evil is one quaver, says the proverb.

And correspondingly, from evil to good.

From the moment when our society was convulsed by the reminder of those illegalities and tortures, they began on all sides to explain, to write, to protest: *Good people* were *there* too —meaning in the NKVD-MGB!

We know which "good" people they are talking about: they were the ones who whispered to the old Bolsheviks: "Don't weaken," or even sneaked a sandwich in to them, and who kicked all the rest around wherever they found them. But

weren't there also some who rose above the Party—who were good in a general, human sense?

Broadly speaking, they should not have been *there*. The Organs avoided employing such people, eliminating them at the recruitment stage. And such people played their hand shrewdly so as to get out of it.[19] Whoever got in by mistake either adjusted to the milieu or else was thrown out, or eased out, or even fell across the rails himself. Still . . . were there no good people left there?

In Kishinev, a young lieutenant gaybist went to Father Viktor Shipovalnikov a full month before he was arrested: "Get away from here, go away, they plan to arrest you!" (Did he do this on his own, or did his mother send him to warn the priest?) After the arrest, this young man was assigned to Father Viktor as an escort guard. And he grieved for him: "Why didn't you go away?"

Or here's another. I had a platoon commander named Lieutenant Ovsyannikov. At the front no one was closer to me than he was. During half the war we ate from the same pot; even under enemy shellfire we would gulp down our food between explosions, so the stew wouldn't get cold. He was a peasant lad with a clean soul and a view of life so undistorted that neither officer candidate school nor being an officer had spoiled him in any degree. He even did what he could to soften my hard edges in many ways. Throughout his service as an officer he concentrated on one thing only: preserving the lives and strength of his soldiers, many of whom were no longer young. He was the first to tell me what the Russian villages were like then and what the collective farms were like. He talked about all this without resentment, without protest, very simply and straightforwardly—just as a forest pool reflects the image of a tree and all its branches, even the smallest. He was deeply shocked by my arrest. He wrote me a combat reference containing the highest praise and got the divisional commander to sign it. After he was demobilized he continued to try to help me, through my relatives. And this, mind you, was in 1947, which was not very different from 1937. At my interrogation I had many reasons to be afraid on his account, especially lest they

19. During the war, a certain Leningrad aviator, after being discharged from the hospital in Ryazan, went to a TB clinic and begged: "Please find something wrong with me! I'm under orders to go into the *Organs!*" The radiologists dreamed up a touch of TB for him—and the *Organs* dropped him posthaste.

read my "War Diary," which contained the stories he'd told me. When I was rehabilitated in 1957, I very much wanted to find him. I remembered his village address and wrote once, and then again, but there was no reply. I discovered one thread I could follow—that he had graduated from the Yaroslavl Pedagogical Institute. When I inquired there, they replied: "He was sent to work in the Organs of State Security." Fine! All the more interesting! I wrote to him at his city address, but there was no reply. Several years passed and *Ivan Denisovich* was published. Well, I thought, now he'll turn up. No! Three years later I asked one of my Yaroslavl correspondents to go to him and personally hand him a letter. My correspondent did as I asked and wrote me: "Evidently he has never read *Ivan Denisovich*." And truly, why should they know how things go with prisoners after they've been sentenced? This time Ovsyannikov couldn't keep silent any longer. He wrote: "After the Institute they offered me work in the *Organs,* and it seemed to me I would be just as successful there." (What did he mean, *successful?*) "I cannot say that I have prospered remarkably in my new walk of life. There are some things I did not like, but I work hard, and, if I am not mistaken, I shall not let my comrades down." (And that's the justification—comradeship!) He ended: "I no longer think about the future."

And that is all. Allegedly, he had not received my previous letters. Evidently, he doesn't want to see me. (But if we had met, I think this would have been a better chapter.) In Stalin's last years he had already become an interrogator—during those very years when they handed out a *twenty-five-year sentence* to everyone who came along. How did everything in his consciousness recircuit itself? How did everything black out? But remembering the once selfless, dedicated boy, as fresh as spring water, can I possibly believe that everything in him changed beyond recall, that there are no living tendrils left?

When the interrogator Goldman gave Vera Korneyeva the "206" form on nondisclosure to sign, she began to catch on to her rights, and then she began to go into the *case* in detail, involving as it did all seventeen members of their "religious group." Goldman raged, but he had to let her study the file. In order not to be bored waiting for her, he led her to a large office, where half a dozen employees were sitting, and left her there. At first

she read quietly, but then a conversation began—perhaps because the others were bored—and Vera launched aloud into a real religious sermon. (One would have had to know her to appreciate this to the full. She was a luminous person, with a lively mind and a gift of eloquence, even though in freedom she had been no more than a lathe operator, a stable girl, and a housewife.) They listened to her impressively, now and then asking questions in order to clarify something or other. It was catching them from an unexpected side of things. People came in from other offices, and the room filled up. Even though they were only typists, stenographers, file clerks, and not interrogators, in 1946 this was still their milieu, the *Organs*. It is impossible to reconstruct her monologue. She managed to work in all sorts of things, including the question of "traitors of the Motherland." Why were there no traitors in the 1812 War of the Fatherland, when there was still serfdom? It would have been natural to have traitors then! But mostly she spoke about religious faith and religious believers. *Formerly*, she declared, unbridled passions were the basis for everything—"Steal the stolen goods"—and, in that state of affairs, religious believers were naturally a hindrance to you. But now, when you want to *build* and prosper in this world, why do you persecute your best citizens? They represent your most precious material: after all, believers don't need to be watched, they do not steal, and they do not shirk. Do you think you can build a just society on a foundation of self-serving and envious people? Everything in the country is falling apart. Why do you spit in the hearts of your best people? Separate church and state properly and do not touch the church; you will not lose a thing thereby. Are you materialists? In that case, put your faith in education—in the possibility that it will, as they say, disperse religious faith. But why arrest people? At this point Goldman came in and started to interrupt rudely. But everyone shouted at him: "Oh, shut up! Keep quiet! Go ahead, woman, talk." (And how should they have addressed her? Citizeness? Comrade? Those forms of address were forbidden, and these people were bound by the conventions of Soviet life. But "woman"—that was how Christ had spoken, and you couldn't go wrong there.) And Vera continued in the presence of her interrogator.

So there in the MGB office those people listened to Korneyeva

—and why did the words of an insignificant prisoner touch them so near the quick?

That same D. Terekhov I mentioned earlier remembers to this day the first prisoner he sentenced to death. "I was sorry for him." His memory obviously clings to something that came from his heart. (But after that first one, he forgot many and no longer kept count any more.)[20]

No matter how icy the jailers in the Big House in Leningrad, the innermost nucleus of the nucleus of the heart—for a nucleus has its own nucleus—had to continue to exist, did it not? N. P——va recalls the time when she was being taken to interrogation by an impassive, silent woman guard with unseeing eyes —when suddenly the bombs began to explode right next to the Big House and it sounded as if at the next moment they would fall directly on them. The terrified guard threw her arms around her prisoner and embraced her, desperate for human companionship and sympathy. Then the bombing stopped. And her eyes became unseeing again. "Hands behind your back! Move along."

Well, of course, there was no great merit in that—to become a human being at the moment of death. Similarly, loving one's own children is no proof of virtue. (People often try to excuse scoundrels by saying: "He's a good family man!") The Chairman of the Supreme Court, I. T. Golyakov, is praised: he enjoyed digging in his garden, he loved books, he used to browse around used- and rare-book stores, he knew the work of Tolstoi, Korolenko, and Chekhov. Well, what did he learn from them? How many thousands did he destroy? Or, for example, that colonel, Konkordiya Iosse's friend, who had roared with laughter in the Vladimir Detention Prison at the memory of locking up a group of old Jews in an ice-filled root cellar, had been afraid of one thing only during all his debaucheries: that his wife might find out about them. She believed in him, regarded him as noble, and this faith of hers was precious to him. But do we dare accept that feeling as a bridgehead to virtue in his heart?

20. An episode with Terekhov: Attempting to prove to me the fairness of the judicial system under Khrushchev, he energetically struck the plate-glass desk top with his hand and cut his wrist on the edge. He rang for help. His subordinates were at the ready. The senior officer on duty brought him iodine and hydrogen peroxide. Continuing the conversation, he helplessly held dampened cotton to the wound: it appears that his blood coagulates poorly. And thus God showed him clearly the limitations of the human being! And he had delivered verdicts, imposed death sentences on others.

And why is it that for nearly two hundred years the Security forces have hung onto the color of the heavens? That was what they wore in Lermontov's lifetime—"and you, blue uniforms!" Then came blue service caps, blue shoulder boards, blue tabs, and then they were ordered to make themselves less conspicuous, and the blue brims were hidden from the gratitude of the people and everything blue on heads and shoulders was made narrower —until what was left was piping, narrow rims . . . but still blue.

Is this only a masquerade?

Or is it that even blackness must, every so often, however rarely, partake of the heavens?

It would be beautiful to think so. But when one learns, for example, the nature of Yagoda's striving toward the sacred . . . An eyewitness from the group around Gorky, who was close to Yagoda at the time, reports that in the vestibule of the bathhouse on Yagoda's estate near Moscow, ikons were placed so that Yagoda and his comrades, after undressing, could use them as targets for revolver practice before going in to take their baths.

Just how are we to understand that? As the act of an *evildoer?* What sort of behavior is it? Do such people really exist?

We would prefer to say that such people cannot exist, that there aren't any. It is permissible to portray evildoers in a story for children, so as to keep the picture simple. But when the great world literature of the past—Shakespeare, Schiller, Dickens—inflates and inflates images of evildoers of the blackest shades, it seems somewhat farcical and clumsy to our contemporary perception. The trouble lies in the way these classic evildoers are pictured. They recognize themselves as evildoers, and they know their souls are black. And they reason: "I cannot live unless I do evil. So I'll set my father against my brother! I'll drink the victim's sufferings until I'm drunk with them!" Iago very precisely identifies his purposes and his motives as being black and born of hate.

But no; that's not the way it is! To do evil a human being must first of all believe that what he's doing is good, or else that it's a well-considered act in conformity with natural law. Fortunately, it is in the nature of the human being to seek a *justification* for his actions.

Macbeth's self-justifications were feeble—and his conscience devoured him. Yes, even Iago was a little lamb too. The imagina-

tion and the spiritual strength of Shakespeare's evildoers stopped short at a dozen corpses. Because they had no *ideology*.

Ideology—that is what gives evildoing its long-sought justification and gives the evildoer the necessary steadfastness and determination. That is the social theory which helps to make his acts seem good instead of bad in his own and others' eyes, so that he won't hear reproaches and curses but will receive praise and honors. That was how the agents of the Inquisition fortified their wills: by invoking Christianity; the conquerors of foreign lands, by extolling the grandeur of their Motherland; the colonizers, by civilization; the Nazis, by race; and the Jacobins (early and late), by equality, brotherhood, and the happiness of future generations.

Thanks to *ideology,* the twentieth century was fated to experience evildoing on a scale calculated in the millions. This cannot be denied, nor passed over, nor suppressed. How, then, do we dare insist that evildoers do not exist? And who was it that destroyed these millions? Without evildoers there would have been no Archipelago.

There was a rumor going the rounds between 1918 and 1920 that the Petrograd Cheka, headed by Uritsky, and the Odessa Cheka, headed by Deich, did not shoot all those condemned to death but fed some of them alive to the animals in the city zoos. I do not know whether this is truth or calumny, or, if there were any such cases, how many there were. But I wouldn't set out to look for proof, either. Following the practice of the bluecaps, I would propose that they prove to us that this was impossible. How else could they get food for the zoos in those famine years? Take it away from the working class? Those enemies were going to die anyway, so why couldn't their deaths support the zoo economy of the Republic and thereby assist our march into the future? Wasn't it *expedient?*

That is the precise line the Shakespearean evildoer could not cross. But the evildoer with ideology does cross it, and his eyes remain dry and clear.

Physics is aware of phenomena which occur only at *threshold* magnitudes, which do not exist at all until a certain *threshold* encoded by and known to nature has been crossed. No matter how intense a yellow light you shine on a lithium sample, it will not emit electrons. But as soon as a weak bluish light begins to glow, it does emit them. (The threshold of the photoelectric effect

has been crossed.) You can cool oxygen to 100 degrees below zero Centigrade and exert as much pressure as you want; it does not yield, but remains a gas. But as soon as minus 183 degrees is reached, it liquefies and begins to flow.

Evidently evildoing also has a threshold magnitude. Yes, a human being hesitates and bobs back and forth between good and evil all his life. He slips, falls back, clambers up, repents, things begin to darken again. But just so long as the threshold of evildoing is not crossed, the possibility of returning remains, and he himself is still within reach of our hope. But when, through the density of evil actions, the result either of their own extreme degree or of the absoluteness of his power, he suddenly crosses that threshold, he has left humanity behind, and without, perhaps, the possibility of return.

■

From the most ancient times justice has been a two-part concept: virtue triumphs, and vice is punished.

We have been fortunate enough to live to a time when virtue, though it does not triumph, is nonetheless not always tormented by attack dogs. Beaten down, sickly, virtue has now been allowed to enter in all its tatters and sit in the corner, as long as it doesn't raise its voice.

However, no one dares say a word about vice. Yes, they did mock virtue, but there was no vice in that. Yes, so-and-so many millions did get mowed down—but no one was to blame for it. And if someone pipes up: "What about *those who . . .*" the answer comes from all sides, reproachfully and amicably at first: "What are you talking about, comrade! Why *open* old *wounds*?"[21] Then they go after you with an oaken club: "Shut up! Haven't you had enough yet? You think you've been rehabilitated!"

In that same period, by 1966, *eighty-six thousand* Nazi criminals had been convicted in West Germany.[22] And still we choke

21. Even in connection with *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, the retired bluecaps living on pensions objected because the book might reopen the wounds of *those who had been imprisoned in camp*. Allegedly, they were the ones to be protected.

22. Meanwhile, in East Germany, nothing of the sort is to be heard. Which means that there they have been *shod with new shoes*; they are valued in the service of the state.

with anger here. We do not hesitate to devote to the subject page after newspaper page and hour after hour of radio time. We even stay after work to attend protest meetings and vote: *"Too few!* Eighty-six thousand are too few. And twenty years is too little! It must go on and on."

And during the same period, in our own country (according to the reports of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court) about *ten men* have been convicted.

What takes place beyond the Oder and the Rhine gets us all worked up. What goes on in the environs of Moscow and behind the green fences near Sochi, or the fact that the murderers of our husbands and fathers ride through our streets and we make way for them as they pass, doesn't get us worked up at all, doesn't touch us. That would be "digging up the past."

Meanwhile, if we translate 86,000 West Germans into our own terms, on the basis of comparative population figures, it would become *one-quarter of a million.*

But in a quarter-century we have not tracked down anyone. We have not brought anyone to trial. It is their wounds we are afraid to reopen. And as a symbol of them all, the smug and stupid Molotov lives on at Granovsky No. 3, a man who has learned nothing at all, even now, though he is saturated with our blood and nobly crosses the sidewalk to seat himself in his long, wide automobile.

Here is a riddle not for us contemporaries to figure out: *Why* is Germany allowed to punish its evildoers and Russia is not? What kind of disastrous path lies ahead of us if we do not have the chance to purge ourselves of that putrefaction rotting inside our body? What, then, can Russia teach the world?

In the German trials an astonishing phenomenon takes place from time to time. The defendant clasps his head in his hands, refuses to make any defense, and from then on asks no concessions from the court. He says that the presentation of his crimes, revived and once again confronting him, has filled him with revulsion and he no longer wants to live.

That is the ultimate height a trial can attain: when evil is so utterly condemned that even the criminal is revolted by it.

A country which has condemned evil 86,000 times from the rostrum of a court and irrevocably condemned it in literature

and among its young people, year by year, step by step, is purged of it.

What are we to do? Someday our descendants will describe our several generations as generations of driveling do-nothings. First we submissively allowed them to massacre us by the millions, and then with devoted concern we tended the murderers in their prosperous old age.

What are we to do if the great Russian tradition of penitence is incomprehensible and absurd to them? What are we to do if the animal terror of hearing even one-hundredth part of all they subjected others to outweighs in their hearts any inclination to justice? If they cling greedily to the harvest of benefits they have watered with the blood of those who perished?

It is clear enough that those men who turned the handle of the meat grinder even as late as 1937 are no longer young. They are fifty to eighty years old. They have lived the best years of their lives prosperously, well nourished and comfortable, so that it is too late for any kind of *equal* retribution as far as they are concerned.

But let us be generous. We will not shoot them. We will not pour salt water into them, nor bury them in bedbugs, nor bridle them into a "swan dive," nor keep them on sleepless "stand-up" for a week, nor kick them with jackboots, nor beat them with rubber truncheons, nor squeeze their skulls in iron rings, nor push them into a cell so that they lie atop one another like pieces of baggage—we will not do any of the things they did! But for the sake of our country and our children we have the duty to *seek them all out and bring them all to trial!* Not to put them on trial so much as their crimes. And to compel each one of them to announce loudly:

"Yes, I was an executioner and a murderer."

And if these words were spoken in our country *only* one-quarter of a million times (a just proportion, if we are not to fall behind West Germany), would it, perhaps, be enough?

It is unthinkable in the twentieth century to fail to distinguish between what constitutes an abominable atrocity that must be prosecuted and what constitutes that "past" which "ought not to be stirred up."

We have to condemn publicly the very *idea* that some people

have the right to repress others. In keeping silent about evil, in burying it so deep within us that no sign of it appears on the surface, we are *implanting* it, and it will rise up a thousandfold in the future. When we neither punish nor reproach evildoers, we are not simply protecting their trivial old age, we are thereby ripping the foundations of justice from beneath new generations. It is for this reason, and not because of the "weakness of indoctrinational work," that they are growing up "indifferent." Young people are acquiring the conviction that foul deeds are never punished on earth, that they always bring prosperity.

It is going to be uncomfortable, horrible, to live in such a country!

Chapter 5

■

First Cell, First Love

How is one to take the title of this chapter? A cell and love in the same breath? Ah, well, probably it has to do with Leningrad during the blockade—and you were imprisoned in the Big House. In that case it would be very understandable. That's why you are still alive—because they shoved you in there. It was the best place in Leningrad—not only for the interrogators, who even lived there and had offices in the cellars in case of shelling. Joking aside, in Leningrad in those days no one washed and everyone's face was covered with a black crust, but in the Big House prisoners were given a hot shower every tenth day. Well, it's true that only the corridors were heated—for the jailers. The cells were left unheated, but after all, there were water pipes in the cells that worked and a toilet, and where else in Leningrad could you find that? And the bread ration was just like the ration outside—barely four and a half ounces. In addition, there was broth made from slaughtered horses once a day! And thin gruel once a day as well!

It was a case of the cat's being envious of the dog's life! But what about punishment cells? And what about the *"supreme measure"*—execution? No, that isn't what the chapter title is about.

Not at all.

You sit down and half-close your eyes and try to remember them all. How many different cells you were imprisoned in during

your term! It is difficult even to count them. And in each one there were people, people. There might be two people in one, 150 in another. You were imprisoned for five minutes in one and all summer long in another.

But in every case, out of all the cells you've been in, your first cell is a very special one, the place where you first encountered others like yourself, doomed to the same fate. All your life you will remember it with an emotion that you otherwise experience only in remembering your first love. And those people, who shared with you the floor and air of that stone cubicle during those days when you rethought your entire life, will from time to time be recollected by you as members of your own family.

Yes, in those days they were your only family.

What you experience in your first interrogation cell parallels nothing in your entire *previous* life or your whole *subsequent* life. No doubt prisons have stood for thousands of years before you came along, and may continue to stand after you too—longer than one would like to think—but that first interrogation cell is unique and inimitable.

Maybe it was a terrible place for a human being. A lice-laden, bedbug-infested lock-up, without windows, without ventilation, without bunks, and with a dirty floor, a box called a KPZ[1] in the village soviet, at the police station, in the railroad station, or in some port. (The KPZ's and the DPZ's are scattered across the face of our land in the greatest abundance. There are masses of prisoners in them.) Or maybe it was "solitary" in the Archangel prison, where the glass had been smeared over with red lead so that the only rays of God's maimed light which crept in to you were crimson, and where a 15-watt bulb burned constantly in the ceiling, day and night. Or "solitary" in the city of Choibalsan, where, for six months at a time, fourteen of you were crowded onto seven square yards of floor space in such a way that you could only shift your bent legs in unison. Or it was one of the Lefortovo "psychological" cells, like No. 111, which was painted black and also had a day-and-night 25-watt bulb, but was in all other respects like every other Lefortovo cell: asphalt floor; the heating valve out in the corridor where only the guards had access

1. KPZ = Cell for Preliminary Detention. DPZ = House of Preliminary Detention. In other words, where interrogations are conducted, not where sentences are served.

to it; and, above all, that interminable irritating roar from the wind tunnel of the neighboring Central Aero- and Hydrodynamics Institute—a roar one could not believe was unintentional, a roar which would make a bowl or cup vibrate so violently that it would slip off the edge of the table, a roar which made it useless to converse and during which one could sing at the top of one's lungs and the jailer wouldn't even hear. And then when the roar stopped, there would ensue a sense of relief and felicity superior to freedom itself.

But it was not the dirty floor, nor the murky walls, nor the odor of the latrine bucket that you loved—but those fellow prisoners with whom you about-faced at command, and that something which beat between your heart and theirs, and their sometimes astonishing words, and then, too, the birth within you, on that very spot, of free-floating thoughts you had so recently been unable to leap up or rise to.

And how much it had cost you to last out until that first cell! You had been kept in a pit, or in a box, or in a cellar. No one had addressed a human word to you. No one had looked at you with a human gaze. All they did was to peck at your brain and heart with iron beaks, and when you cried out or groaned, they laughed.

For a week or a month you had been an abandoned waif, alone among enemies, and you had already said good-bye to reason and to life; and you had already tried to kill yourself by "falling" from the radiator in such a way as to smash your brains against the iron cone of the valve.[2] Then all of a sudden you were alive again, and were brought in to your friends. And reason returned to you.

That's what your first cell is!

You waited for that cell. You dreamed of it almost as eagerly as of freedom. Meanwhile, they kept shoving you around between cracks in the wall and holes in the ground, from Lefortovo into some legendary, diabolical Sukhanovka.

Sukhanovka was the most terrible prison the MGB had. Its very name was used to intimidate prisoners; interrogators would hiss it threateningly. And you'd not be able to question those who had been there: either they were insane and talking only disconnected nonsense, or they were dead.

2. Alexander D.

Sukhanovka was a former monastery, dating back to Catherine the Great. It consisted of two buildings—one in which prisoners served out their terms, and the other a structure that contained sixty-eight monks' cells and was used for interrogations. The journey there in a Black Maria took two hours, and only a handful of people knew that the prison was really just a few miles from Lenin's Gorki estate and near the former estate of Zinaida Volkonskaya. The countryside surrounding it was beautiful.

There they stunned the newly arrived prisoner with a stand-up punishment cell again so narrow that when he was no longer able to stand he had to sag, supported by his bent knees propped against the wall. There was no alternative. They kept prisoners thus for more than a day to break their resistance. But they ate tender, tasty food at Sukhanovka, which was like nothing else in the MGB—because it was brought in from the Architects' Rest Home. They didn't maintain a separate kitchen to prepare hogwash. However, the amount one architect would eat—including fried potatoes and meatballs—was divided among twelve prisoners. As a result the prisoners were not only always hungry but also exceedingly irritable.

The cells were all built for two, but prisoners under interrogation were usually kept in them singly. The dimensions were five by six and a half feet.[3] Two little round stools were welded to the stone floor, like stumps, and at night, if the guard unlocked

3. To be absolutely precise, they were 156 centimeters by 209 centimeters. How do we know? Through a triumph of engineering calculation and a strong heart that even Sukhanovka could not break. The measurements were the work of Alexander D., who would not allow them to drive him to madness or despair. He resisted by striving to use his mind to calculate distances. In Lefortovo he counted steps, converted them into kilometers, remembered from a map how many kilometers it was from Moscow to the border, and then how many across all Europe, and how many across the Atlantic Ocean. He was sustained in this by the hope of returning to America. And in one year in Lefortovo solitary he got, so to speak, halfway across the Atlantic. Thereupon they took him to Sukhanovka. Here, realizing how few would survive to tell of it—and all our information about it comes from him—he invented a method of measuring the cell. The numbers 10/22 were stamped on the bottom of his prison bowl, and he guessed that "10" was the diameter of the bottom and "22" the diameter of the outside edge. Then he pulled a thread from a towel, made himself a tape measure, and measured everything with it. Then he began to invent a way of sleeping *standing up,* propping his knees against the small chair, and of deceiving the guard into thinking his eyes were open. He succeeded in this deception, and that was how he managed not to go insane when Ryumin kept him sleepless for a month.

a cylinder lock, a shelf dropped from the wall onto each stump and remained there for seven hours (in other words, during the hours of interrogation, since there was no daytime interrogation at Sukhanovka at all), and a little straw mattress large enough for a child also dropped down. During the day, the stool was exposed and free, but one was forbidden to sit on it. In addition, a table lay, like an ironing board, on four upright pipes. The "fortochka" in the window—the small hinged pane for ventilation —was always closed except for ten minutes in the morning when the guard cranked it open. The glass in the little window was reinforced. There were never any exercise periods out of doors. Prisoners were taken to the toilet at 6 A.M. only—i.e., when no one's stomach needed it. There was no toilet period in the evening. There were two guards for each block of seven cells, so that was why the prisoners could be under almost constant inspection through the peephole, the only interruption being the time it took the guard to step past two doors to a third. And that was the purpose of silent Sukhanovka: to leave the prisoner not a single moment for sleep, not a single stolen moment for privacy. You were always being watched and always in their power.

But if you endured the whole duel with insanity and all the trials of loneliness, and had stood firm, you deserved your first cell! And now when you got into it, your soul would heal.

If you had surrendered, if you had given in and betrayed everyone, you were also ready for your first cell. But it would have been better for you not to have lived until that happy moment and to have died a victor in the cellar, without having signed a single sheet of paper.

Now for the first time you were about to see people who were not your enemies. Now for the first time you were about to see others who were alive,[4] who were traveling your road, and whom you could join to yourself with the joyous word "we."

Yes, that word which you may have despised out in freedom, when they used it as a substitute for your own individuality ("All of us, like one man!" Or: "We are deeply angered!" Or:

4. And if this was in the Big House in Leningrad during the siege, you may also have seen cannibals. Those who had eaten human flesh, those who had traded in human livers from dissecting rooms, were for some reason kept by the MGB with the political prisoners.

"We demand!" Or: "We swear!"), is now revealed to you as something sweet: you are not alone in the world! Wise, spiritual beings—*human beings*—still exist.

■

I had been dueling for four days with the interrogator, when the jailer, having waited until I lay down to sleep in my blindingly lit box, began to unlock my door. I heard him all right, but before he could say: "Get up! Interrogation!" I wanted to lie for another three-hundredths of a second with my head on the pillow and pretend I was sleeping. But, instead of the familiar command, the guard ordered: "Get up! Pick up your bedding!"

Uncomprehending, and unhappy because this was my most precious time, I wound on my footcloths, put on my boots, my overcoat, my winter cap, and clasped the government-issue mattress in my arms. The guard was walking on tiptoe and kept signaling me not to make any noise as he led me down a corridor silent as the grave, through the fourth floor of the Lubyanka, past the desk of the section supervisor, past the shiny numbers on the cells and the olive-colored covers of the peepholes, and unlocked Cell 67. I entered and he locked it behind me immediately.

Even though only a quarter of an hour or so had passed since the signal to go to sleep had been given, the period allotted the prisoners for sleeping was so fragile, and undependable, and brief that, by the time I arrived, the inhabitants of Cell 67 were already asleep on their metal cots with their hands on top of the blankets.[5]

At the sound of the door opening, all three started and raised their heads for an instant. They, too, were waiting to learn which of them might be taken to interrogation.

And those three lifted heads, those three unshaven, crumpled

5. New measures of oppression, additions to the traditional prison regulations, were invented only gradually in the internal prisons of the GPU-NKVD-MGB. At the beginning of the twenties, prisoners were not subjected to this particular measure, and lights were turned off at night as in the ordinary world. But they began to keep the lights on, on the logical grounds that they needed to keep the prisoners in view at all times. (When they used to turn the lights on for inspection, it had been even worse.) Arms had to be kept outside the blanket, allegedly to prevent the prisoner from strangling himself beneath the blanket and thus escaping his just interrogation. It was demonstrated experimentally that in the winter a human being always wants to keep his arms under the bedclothes for warmth; consequently the measure was made permanent.

pale faces, seemed to me so human, so dear, that I stood there, hugging my mattress, and smiled with happiness. And they smiled. And what a forgotten look that was—after only one week!

"Are you from freedom?" they asked me. (That was the question customarily put to a newcomer.)

"Nooo," I replied. And that was a newcomer's usual first reply.

They had in mind that I had probably been arrested recently, which meant that I came *from freedom.* And I, after ninety-six hours of interrogation, hardly considered that I was from "freedom." Was I not already a veteran prisoner? Nonetheless I was *from freedom.* The beardless old man with the black and very lively eyebrows was already asking me for military and political news. Astonishing! Even though it was late February, they knew nothing about the Yalta Conference, nor the encirclement of East Prussia, nor anything at all about our own attack below Warsaw in mid-January, nor even about the woeful December retreat of the Allies. According to regulations, those under interrogation were not supposed to know anything about the outside world. And here indeed they didn't!

I was prepared to spend half the night telling them all about it—with pride, as though all the victories and advances were the work of my own hands. But at this point the duty jailer brought in my cot, and I had to set it up without making any noise. I was helped by a young fellow my own age, also a military man. His tunic and aviator's cap hung on his cot. He had asked me, even before the old man spoke, not for news of the war but for tobacco. But although I felt openhearted toward my new friends, and although not many words had been exchanged in the few minutes since I joined them, I sensed something alien in this front-line soldier who was my contemporary, and, as far as he was concerned, I clammed up immediately and forever.

(I had not yet even heard the word "nasedka"—"stool pigeon" —nor learned that there had to be one such "stool pigeon" in each cell. And I had not yet had time to think things over and conclude that I did not like this fellow, Georgi Kramarenko. But a spiritual relay, a sensor relay, had clicked inside me, and it had closed him off from me for good and all. I would not bother to recall this event if it had been the only one of its kind. But soon,

with astonishment, and alarm, I became aware of the work of this internal sensor relay as a constant, inborn trait. The years passed and I lay on the same bunks, marched in the same formations, and worked in the same work brigades with hundreds of others. And always that secret sensor relay, for whose creation I deserved not the least bit of credit, worked even before I remembered it was there, worked at the first sight of a human face and eyes, at the first sound of a voice—so that I opened my heart to that person either fully or just the width of a crack, or else shut myself off from him completely. This was so consistently unfailing that all the efforts of the State Security officers to employ stool pigeons began to seem to me as insignificant as being pestered by gnats: after all, a person who has undertaken to be a traitor always betrays the fact in his face and in his voice, and even though some were more skilled in pretense, there was always something fishy about them. On the other hand, the sensor relay helped me distinguish those to whom I could from the very beginning of our acquaintance completely disclose my most precious depths and secrets—secrets for which heads roll. Thus it was that I got through eight years of imprisonment, three years of exile, and another six years of underground authorship, which were in no wise less dangerous. During all those seventeen years I recklessly revealed myself to dozens of people—and didn't make a misstep even once. (I have never read about this trait anywhere, and I mention it here for those interested in psychology. It seems to me that such spiritual sensors exist in many of us, but because we live in too technological and rational an age, we neglect this miracle and don't allow it to develop.)

We set up the cot, and I was then ready to talk—in a whisper, of course, and lying down, so as not to be sent from this cozy nest into a punishment cell. But our third cellmate, a middle-aged man whose cropped head already showed the white bristles of imminent grayness, peered at me discontentedly and said with characteristic northern severity: "Tomorrow! Night is for sleeping."

That was the most intelligent thing to do. At any minute, one of us could have been pulled out for interrogation and held until 6 A.M., when the interrogator would go home to sleep but we were forbidden to.

One night of undisturbed sleep was more important than all the fates on earth!

One more thing held me back, which I didn't quite catch right away but had felt nonetheless from the first words of my story, although I could not at this early date find a name for it: As each of us had been arrested, everything in our world had switched places, a 180-degree shift in all our concepts had occurred, and the good news I had begun to recount with such enthusiasm might not be good news for *us* at all.

My cellmates turned on their sides, covered their eyes with their handkerchiefs to keep out the light from the 200-watt bulb, wound towels around their upper arms, which were chilled from lying on top of the blankets, hid their lower arms furtively beneath them, and went to sleep.

And I lay there, filled to the brim with the joy of being among them. One hour ago I could not have counted on being with anyone. I could have come to my end with a bullet in the back of my head—which was what the interrogator kept promising me—without having seen anyone at all. Interrogation still hung over me, but how far it had retreated! Tomorrow I would be telling them my story (though not talking about my *case,* of course) and they would be telling me their stories too. How interesting tomorrow would be, one of the best days of my life! (Thus, very early and very clearly, I had this consciousness that prison was not an abyss for me, but the most important turning point in my life.)

Every detail of the cell interested me. Sleep fled, and when the peephole was not in use I studied it all furtively. Up there at the top of one wall was a small indentation the length of three bricks, covered by a dark-blue paper blind. They had already told me it was a window. Yes, there was a window in the cell. And the blind served as an air-raid blackout. Tomorrow there would be weak daylight, and in the middle of the day they would turn off the glaring light bulb. How much that meant—to have daylight in daytime!

There was also a table in the cell. On it, in the most conspicuous spot, were a teapot, a chess set, and a small pile of books. (I was not yet aware why they were so conspicuously positioned. It turned out to be another example of the Lubyanka

system at work. During his once-a-minute peephole inspection, the jailer was supposed to make sure that the gifts of the prison administration were not being misused: that the teapot was not being used to break down the wall; that no one was swallowing the chessmen and thereby possibly cashing in his chips and ceasing to be a citizen of the U.S.S.R.; and that no one was starting a fire with the books in the hope of burning down the whole prison. And a prisoner's eyeglasses were considered so potentially dangerous that they were not allowed to remain on the table during the night; the prison administration took them away until morning.)

What a cozy life! Chess, books, cots with springs, decent mattresses, clean linen. I could not remember having slept like this during the whole war. There was a worn parquet floor. One could take nearly four strides from window to door in the aisle between the cots. No, indeed! This central political prison was a real resort.

And no shells were falling. I remembered their sounds: the high-pitched sobbing way up overhead, then the rising whistle, and the crash as they burst. And how tenderly the mortar shells whistled. And how everything trembled from the four blasts of what we called "Dr. Goebbels' mortar-rockets." And I remembered the wet snow and mud near Wormditt, where I had been arrested, which our men were still wading through to keep the Germans from breaking out of our encirclement.

All right then, the hell with you; if you don't want me to fight, I won't.

■

Among our many lost values there is one more: the high worth of those people who spoke and wrote Russian before us. It is odd that they are almost undescribed in our prerevolutionary literature. Only very rarely do we feel their breath—from Marina Tsvetayeva, or from "Mother Mariya" (in her *Recollections of Blok*). They saw too much to settle on any one thing. They reached toward the sublime too fervently to stand firmly on the earth. Before societies fall, just such a stratum of wise, thinking people emerges, people who are that and nothing more. And how they were laughed at! How they were mocked! As though they

stuck in the craw of people whose deeds and actions were single-minded and narrow-minded. And the only nickname they were christened with was "rot." Because these people were a flower that bloomed too soon and breathed too delicate a fragrance. And so they were mowed down.

These people were particularly helpless in their personal lives: they could neither bend with the wind, nor pretend, nor get by; every word declared an opinion, a passion, a protest. And it was just such people the mowing machine cut down, just such people the chaff-cutter shredded.[6]

They had passed through these very same cells. But the cell walls—for the wallpaper had long since been stripped off, and they had been plastered, whitewashed, and painted more than once—gave off nothing of the past. (On the contrary, the walls now tried to listen to us with hidden microphones.) Nowhere is anything written down or reported of the former inhabitants of these cells, of the conversations held in them, of the thoughts with which earlier inmates went forth to be shot or to imprisonment on the Solovetsky Islands. And now such a volume, which would be worth forty freight car loads of our literature, will in all probability never be written.

Those still alive recount to us all sorts of trivial details: that there used to be wooden trestle beds here and that the mattresses were stuffed with straw. That, way back in 1920, before they put *muzzles* over the windows, the panes were whitewashed up to the top. By 1923 "muzzles" had been installed (although we unanimously ascribed them to Beria). They said that back in the twenties, prison authorities had been very lenient toward prisoners communicating with each other by "knocking" on the walls: this was a carry-over from the stupid tradition in the Tsarist prisons that if the prisoners were deprived of knocking, they would have no way to occupy their time. And another thing: back in the twenties all the jailers were Latvians, from the Latvian Red Army units and others, and the food was all handed out by strapping Latvian women.

All this was trivial detail, but it was certainly food for thought.

I myself had needed very badly to get into this main Soviet

6. I am almost fearful of saying it, but it seems as though on the eve of the 1970's these people are emerging once again. That is surprising. It was almost too much to hope for.

political prison, and I was grateful that I had been sent here: I thought about Bukharin a great deal and I wanted to picture the whole thing as it had actually been. However, I had the impression that we were by now merely the remnants, and that in this respect we might just as well have been in any provincial "internal" prison.[7] Still, there was a good deal of status in being here.

And there was no reason to be bored with my companions in my new cell. They were people to listen to and people with whom to compare notes.

The old fellow with the lively eyebrows—and at sixty-three he in no way bore himself like an old man—was Anatoly Ilyich Fastenko. He was a big asset to our Lubyanka cell—both as a keeper of the old Russian prison traditions and as a living history of Russian revolutions. Thanks to all that he remembered, he somehow managed to put in perspective everything that had taken place in the past and everything that was taking place in the present. Such people are valuable not only in a cell. We badly need them in our society as a whole.

Right there in our cell we read Fastenko's name in a book about the 1905 Revolution. He had been a Social Democrat for such a long, long time that in the end, it seemed, he had ceased to be one.

He had been sentenced to his first prison term in 1904 while still a young man, but he had been freed outright under the "manifesto" proclaimed on October 17, 1905.[8]

His story about that amnesty was interesting. In those years,

7. One attached to a State Security headquarters.

8. Who among us has not learned by heart from our school history courses, as well as from the *Short Course* in the history of the Soviet Communist Party, that this "provocative and foul manifesto" was a mockery of freedom, that the Tsar had proclaimed: "Freedom for the dead, and prison for the living"? But the epigram was bogus. The manifesto declared that *all* political parties were to be tolerated and that a State Duma was to be convened, and it provided for an amnesty which was honest and extremely extensive. (The fact that it had been issued under duress was something else again.) Indeed, under its terms none other than *all* political prisoners without exception were to be released without reference to the term and type of punishment they had been sentenced to. Only criminals remained imprisoned. The Stalin amnesty of July 7, 1945—true, it was not issued under duress—was exactly the opposite. All the political prisoners remained *imprisoned.*

of course, there were no muzzles on the prison windows, and from the cells of the Belaya Tserkov Prison in which Fastenko was being held the prisoners could easily observe the prison courtyard and the street, and all arrivals and departures, and they could shout back and forth as they pleased to ordinary citizens outside. During the day of October 17, these outsiders, having learned of the amnesty by telegraph, announced the news to the prisoners. In their happiness the political prisoners went wild with joy. They smashed windowpanes, broke down doors, and demanded that the prison warden release them immediately. And were any of them kicked right in the snout with jackboots? Or put in punishment cells? Or was anyone deprived of library and commissary privileges? Of course not! In his distress, the warden ran from cell to cell and implored them: "Gentlemen! I beg of you, please be reasonable! I don't have the authority to release you on the basis of a telegraphed report. I must have direct orders from my superiors in Kiev. Please, I beg of you. You will have to spend the night here." And in actual fact they were most barbarously kept there for one more day.[9]

On getting back their freedom, Fastenko and his comrades immediately rushed to join the revolution. In 1906 he was sentenced to eight years at hard labor, which meant four years in irons and four in exile. He served the first four years in the Sevastopol Central Prison, where, incidentally, during his stay, a mass escape was organized from outside by a coalition of revolutionary parties: the SR's, the Anarchists, and the Social Democrats. A bomb blew a hole in the prison wall big enough for a horse and rider to go through, and two dozen prisoners—not everyone who wanted to escape, but those who had been chosen ahead of time by their parties and, right inside the prison, had been equipped with pistols by the jailers—fled through the hole and escaped. All but one: Anatoly Fastenko was selected by the Russian Social Democratic Party not to escape but to cause a disturbance in order to distract the attention of the guards.

On the other hand, when he reached exile in the Yenisei area,

9. After Stalin's amnesty, as I will recount later, those amnestied were held in prison for another two or three months and were forced to *slog away* just as before. And no one considered this illegal.

he did not stay there long. Comparing his stories (and later those of others who had survived) with the well-known fact that under the Tsar our revolutionaries escaped from exile by the hundreds and hundreds, and more and more of them went abroad, one comes to the conclusion that the only prisoners who did not escape from Tsarist exile were the lazy ones—because it was so easy. Fastenko "escaped," which is to say, he simply left his place of exile without a passport. He went to Vladivostok, expecting to get aboard a steamer through an acquaintance there. Somehow it did not work out. So then, still without a passport, he calmly crossed the whole of Mother Russia on a train and went to the Ukraine, where he had been a member of the Bolshevik underground and where he had first been arrested. There he was given a false passport, and he left to cross the Austrian border. That particular step was so routine, and Fastenko felt himself so safe from pursuit, that he was guilty of an astonishing piece of carelessness. Having arrived at the border, and having turned in his passport to the official there, he suddenly discovered he *could not remember* his new name. What was he to do? There were forty passengers altogether and the official had already begun to call off their names. Fastenko thought up a solution. He pretended to be asleep. He listened as the passports were handed back to their owners, and he noted that the name Makarov was called several times without anyone responding. But even at this point he was not absolutely certain it was his name. Finally, the dragon of the imperial regime bent down to the underground revolutionary and politely tapped him on the shoulder: "Mr. Makarov! Mr. Makarov! Please, here is your passport!"

Fastenko headed for Paris. There he got to know Lenin and Lunacharsky and carried out some administrative duties at the Party school at Longjumeau. At the same time he studied French, looked around him, and decided that he wanted to travel farther and see the world. Before the war he went to Canada, where he worked for a while, and he spent some time in the United States as well. He was astonished by the free and easy, yet solidly established life in these countries, and he concluded that they would never have a proletarian revolution and even that they hardly needed one.

Then, in Russia, the long-awaited revolution came, sooner

than expected, and everyone went back to Russia, and then there was one more Revolution. Fastenko no longer felt his former passion for these revolutions. But he returned, compelled by the same need that urges birds to their annual migrations.[10]

There was much about Fastenko I could not yet understand. In my eyes, perhaps the main thing about him, and the most surprising, was that he had known Lenin personally. Yet he was quite cool in recalling this. (Such was my attitude at the time that when someone in the cell called Fastenko by his patronymic alone, without using his given name—in other words simply "Ilyich," asking: "Ilyich, is it your turn to take out the latrine bucket?"—I was utterly outraged and offended because it seemed sacrilege to me not only to use Lenin's patronymic in the same sentence as "latrine bucket," but even to call anyone on earth "Ilyich" except that one man, Lenin.) For this reason, no doubt, there was much that Fastenko would have liked to explain to me that he still could not bring himself to.

Nonetheless, he did say to me, in the clearest Russian: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image!" But I failed to understand him!

Observing my enthusiasm, he more than once said to me insistently: "You're a mathematician; it's a mistake for you to forget that maxim of Descartes: 'Question everything!' Question *everything!*" What did this mean—"everything"? Certainly not *everything!* It seemed to me that I had questioned enough things as it was, and that was enough of that!

Or he said: "Hardly any of the old hard-labor political pris-

10. Soon after Fastenko returned to the Motherland, he was followed by a Canadian acquaintance, a former sailor on the battleship *Potemkin*, one of the mutineers, in fact, who had escaped to Canada and become a well-to-do farmer there. This former *Potemkin* sailor sold everything he owned, his farm and cattle, and returned to his native region with his money and his new tractor to help build sacred socialism. He enlisted in one of the first agricultural communes and donated his tractor to it. The tractor was driven any which way by whoever happened along and was quickly ruined. And the former *Potemkin* sailor saw things turning out very differently from the way he had pictured them for twenty years. Those in charge were incompetents, issuing orders that any sensible farmer could see were wild nonsense. In addition, he became skinnier and skinnier, and his clothes wore out, and nothing was left of the Canadian dollars he had exchanged for paper rubles. He begged to be allowed to leave with his family, and he crossed the border as poor as when he fled from the *Potemkin*. He crossed the ocean, just as he had done then, working his way as a sailor, because he had no money for passages, and back in Canada he began life all over again as a hired hand on a farm.

oners of Tsarist times are left. I am one of the last. All the hard-labor politicals have been destroyed, and they even dissolved our society in the thirties." "Why?" I asked. "So we would not get together and discuss things." And although these simple words, spoken in a calm tone, should have been shouted to the heavens, should have shattered windowpanes, I understood them only as indicating one more of Stalin's evil deeds. It was a troublesome fact, but without roots.

One thing is absolutely definite: not everything that enters our ears penetrates our consciousness. Anything too far out of tune with our attitude is lost, either in the ears themselves or somewhere beyond, but it is lost. And even though I clearly remember Fastenko's many stories, I recall his opinions but vaguely. He gave me the names of various books which he strongly advised me to read whenever I got back to freedom. In view of his age and his health, he evidently did not count on getting out of prison alive, and he got some satisfaction from hoping that I would someday understand his ideas. I couldn't write down the list of books he suggested, and even as it was there was a great deal of prison life for me to remember, but I at least remembered those titles which were closest to my taste then: *Untimely Thoughts* by Gorky (whom I regarded very highly at that time, since he had, after all, outdone all the other classical Russian writers in being proletarian) and Plekhanov's *A Year in the Motherland.*

Today, when I read what Plekhanov wrote on October 28, 1917, I can clearly reconstruct what Fastenko himself thought:

> . . . I am disappointed by the events of the last days not because I do not desire the triumph of the working class in Russia but precisely because I pray for it with all the strength of my soul. . . . [We must] remember Engels' remark that there could be no greater historical tragedy for the working class than to seize political power when it is not ready for it. [Such a seizure of power] would compel it to retreat far back from the positions which were won in February and March of the present year. [11]

When Fastenko returned to Russia, pressure was put on him, out of respect for his old underground exploits, to accept an

11. G. V. Plekhanov, "An Open Letter to the Workers of Petrograd," in the newspaper *Yedinstvo,* October 28, 1917.

important position. But he did not want to; instead, he accepted a modest post on the newspaper *Pravda* and then a still more modest one, and eventually he moved over to the Moscow City Planning office, where he worked in an inconspicuous job.

I was surprised. Why had he chosen such a cul-de-sac? He explained in terms I found incomprehensible. "You can't teach an old dog to live on a chain."

Realizing that there was nothing he could accomplish, Fastenko quite simply wanted, in a very human way, to stay alive. He had already gotten used to living on a very small pension—not one of the "personal" pensions especially assigned by the government, because to have accepted that sort of thing would have called attention to his close ties to many who had been shot. And he might have managed to survive in this way until 1953. But, to his misfortune, they arrested another tenant in his apartment, a debauched, perpetually drunken writer, L. S——v, who had bragged somewhere while he was drunk about owning a pistol. Owning a pistol meant an obligatory conviction for terrorism, and Fastenko, with his ancient Social Democratic past, was naturally the very picture of a terrorist. Therefore, the interrogator immediately proceeded to *nail* him for terrorism and, simultaneously, of course, for service in the French and Canadian intelligence services and thus for service in the Tsarist *Okhrana* as well.[12] And in 1945, to earn his fat pay, the fat interrogator was quite seriously leafing through the archives of the Tsarist provincial gendarmerie administrations, and composing entirely serious interrogation depositions about conspiratorial nicknames, passwords, and secret rendezvous and meetings in 1903.

On the tenth day, which was as soon as was permitted, his old wife (they had no children) delivered to Anatoly Ilyich such parcels as she could manage to put together: a piece of black bread weighing about ten and a half ounces (after all, it had been bought in the open market, where bread cost 50 rubles a pound), and a dozen peeled boiled potatoes which had been pierced by an awl when the parcel was being inspected. And the

12. This was one of Stalin's pet themes—to ascribe to every arrested Bolshevik, and in general to every arrested revolutionary, service in the Tsarist *Okhrana*. Was this merely his intolerant suspiciousness? Or was it intuition? Or, perhaps, analogy? . . .

sight of those wretched—and truly sacred—parcels tore at one's heartstrings.

That was what this human being had earned for sixty-three years of honesty and doubts.

■

The four cots in our cell left an aisle in the middle, where the table stood. But several days after my arrival, they put a fifth person in with us and inserted a cot crosswise.

They brought in the newcomer an hour before rising time—that brief, sweetly cerebral last hour, and three of us did not lift our heads. Only Kramarenko jumped up, to sponge some tobacco, and maybe, with it, some material for the interrogator. They began to converse in a whisper, and we tried not to listen. But it was quite impossible not to overhear the newcomer's whisper. It was so loud, so disquieting, so tense, and so close to a sob, that we realized it was no ordinary grief that had entered our cell. The newcomer was asking whether many were shot. Nonetheless, without turning my head, I *called them down*, asking them to talk more quietly.

When, on the signal to rise, we all instantly jumped up (lying abed earned you the punishment cell), we saw a general, no less! True, he wasn't wearing any insignia of rank, not even tabs—nor could one see where his insignia had been torn off or unscrewed, but his expensive tunic, his soft overcoat, indeed his entire figure and face, told us that he was unquestionably a general, in fact a typical general, and most certainly a full general, and not one of your run-of-the-mill major generals. He was short, stocky, very broad of shoulder and body, and notably fat in the face, but this fat, which had been acquired by eating well, endowed him, not with an appearance of good-natured accessibility, but with an air of weighty importance, of affiliation with the highest ranks. The crowning part of his face was, to be sure, not the upper portion, but the lower, which resembled a bulldog's jaw. It was there that his energy was concentrated, along with his will and authoritativeness, which were what had enabled him to attain such rank by early middle age.

We introduced ourselves, and it turned out that L. V. Z——v

was even younger than he appeared. He would be thirty-six that year—"If they don't shoot me." Even more surprisingly, it developed that he was not a general at all, not even a colonel, and not even a military man—but an *engineer!*

An engineer? I had grown up among engineers, and I could remember the engineers of the twenties very well indeed: their open, shining intellects, their free and gentle humor, their agility and breadth of thought, the ease with which they shifted from one engineering field to another, and, for that matter, from technology to social concerns and art. Then, too, they personified good manners and delicacy of taste; well-bred speech that flowed evenly and was free of uncultured words; one of them might play a musical instrument, another dabble in painting; and their faces always bore a spiritual imprint.

From the beginning of the thirties I had lost contact with that milieu. Then came the war. And here before me stood—an *engineer*, one of those who had replaced *those* destroyed.

No one could deny him one point of superiority. He was much stronger, more visceral, than *those others* had been. His shoulders and hands retained their strength even though they had not needed it for a long time. Freed from the restraints of courtesy, he stared sternly and spoke impersonally, as if he didn't even consider the possibility of a dissenting view. He had grown up differently from *those others* too, and he worked differently.

His father had plowed the earth in the most literal sense. Lenya Z——v had been one of those disheveled, unenlightened peasant boys whose wasted talents so distressed Belinsky and Tolstoi. He was certainly no Lomonosov, and he could never have gotten to the Academy on his own, but he was talented. If there had been no revolution, he would have plowed the land, and he would have become well-to-do because he was energetic and active, and he might have raised himself into the merchant class.

It being the Soviet period, however, he entered the Komsomol, and his work in the Komsomol, overshadowing his other talents, lifted him out of anonymity, out of his lowly state, out of the countryside, and shot him like a rocket through the Workers' School right into the Industrial Academy. He arrived there in 1929—at the very moment when *those other* engineers were

being driven in whole herds into Gulag. It was urgently necessary for those in power to produce their own engineers—politically-conscious, loyal, one-hundred percenters, who were to become bigwigs of production, Soviet businessmen, in fact, rather than people who did things themselves. That was the moment when the famous *commanding heights* overlooking the as-yet-uncreated industries were empty. And it was the fate of Z——v's class in the Industrial Academy to occupy them.

Z——v's life became a chain of triumphs, a garland winding right up to the peak. Those were the exhausting years, from 1929 to 1933, when the civil war was being waged, not as in 1918 to 1920 with tachankas—machine guns mounted on horse-drawn carts—but with police dogs, when the long lines of those dying of famine trudged toward the railroad stations in the hope of getting to the cities, which was where the breadgrains were evidently ripening, but were refused tickets and were unable to leave—and lay dying beneath the station fences in a submissive human heap of homespun coats and bark shoes. In those same years Z——v not only did not know that bread was rationed to city dwellers but, at a time when a manual laborer was receiving 60 rubles a month in wages, he enjoyed a *student's* scholarship of 900 rubles a month. Z——v's heart did not ache for the countryside whose dust he had shaken from his feet. His new life was already soaring elsewhere among the victors and the leaders.

He never had time to be an ordinary, run-of-the-mill foreman. He was immediately assigned to a position in which he had dozens of engineers and thousands of workers under him. He was the chief engineer of the big construction projects outside Moscow. From the very beginning of the war he, of course, had an exemption from military service. He was evacuated to Alma-Ata, together with the department he worked for, and in this area he bossed even bigger construction projects on the Ili River. But in this case his workers were prisoners. The sight of those little gray people bothered him very little at the time, nor did it inspire him to any reappraisals nor compel him to take a closer look. In that gleaming orbit in which he circled, the only important thing was to achieve the projected totals, fulfillment of the plan. And it was quite enough for Z——v merely to punish a particular construction unit, a particular camp, and a par-

ticular work superintendent—after that, it was up to them to manage to fulfill their norm with their own resources. How many hours they had to work to do it or what ration they had to get along on were details that didn't concern him.

The war years deep in the rear were the best years in Z——v's life. Such is the eternal and universal aspect of war: the more grief it accumulates at one of its poles, the more joy it generates at the other. Z——v had not only a bulldog's jaw but also a swift, enterprising, businesslike grasp. With the greatest skill he immediately switched to the economy's new wartime rhythm. Everything for victory. Give and take, and the war will write it all off. He made just one small concession to the war. He got along without suits and neckties, and, camouflaging himself in khaki color, had chrome-leather boots made to order and donned a general's tunic—the very one in which he appeared before us. That was fashionable and not uncommon at the time. It provoked neither anger in the war-wounded nor reproachful glances from women.

Women usually looked at him with another sort of glance. They came to him to get well fed, to get warmed up, to have some fun. He had wild money passing through his hands. His billfold bulged like a little barrel with expense money, and to him ten-ruble notes were like kopecks, and thousands like single rubles. Z——v didn't hoard them, regret spending them, or keep count of them. He counted only the women who passed through his hands, and particularly those he had "uncorked." This count was his sport. In the cell he assured us that his arrest had broken off the count at 290 plus, and he regretted that he had not reached 300. Since it was wartime and the women were alone and lonely. And since, in addition to his power and money, he had the virility of a Rasputin, one can probably believe him. And he was quite prepared to describe one episode after another. It was just that our ears were not prepared to listen to him. Even though no danger threatened him during those last years, he had frantically grabbed these women, messed them up, and then thrown them away, like a greedy diner eating boiled crayfish—grabbing one, devouring it, sucking it, then grabbing the next.

He was so accustomed to the malleability of material, to his own vigorous boarlike drive across the land! (Whenever he was

especially agitated, he would dash about the cell like a powerful boar who might just knock down an oak tree in his path.) He was so accustomed to an environment in which all the leaders were his own kind of people, in which one could always make a deal, work things out, cover them up! He forgot that the more success one gains, the more envy one arouses. As he found out during his interrogation, a dossier had been accumulating against him since way back in 1936, on the basis of an anecdote he had carelessly told at a drunken party. More denunciations had followed, and more testimony from agents (after all, one has to take women to restaurants, where all types of people see you!). Another report pointed out that he had been in no hurry to leave Moscow in 1941, that he had been waiting for the Germans. He had in actual fact stayed on longer than he should have, apparently because of some woman. Z——v took great care to keep his business deals clean. But he quite forgot the existence of Article 58. Nonetheless, the avalanche might not have overwhelmed him had he not grown overconfident and refused to supply building materials for a certain prosecutor's dacha. That was what caused his dormant case to awaken and tremble and start rolling. (And this was one more instance of the fact that cases begin with the material self-interest of the blueboys.)

The scope of Z——v's concepts of the world can be judged by the fact that he believed there was a *Canadian* language. During the course of two months in the cell, he did not read a single book, not even a whole page, and if he did read a paragraph, it was only to be distracted from his gloomy thoughts about his interrogation. It was clear from his conversation that he had read even less in freedom. He knew of Pushkin—as the hero of bawdy stories. And of Tolstoi he knew only, in all probability, that he was—a Deputy of the Supreme Soviet!

On the other hand, was he a one hundred percent loyal Communist? Was he that same socially-conscious proletarian who had been brought up to replace Palchinsky and von Meck and their ilk? This was what was really surprising—he was most certainly not! We once discussed the whole course of the war with him, and I said that from the very first moment I had never had any doubts about our victory over the Germans. He looked at me sharply; he did not believe me. "Come on, what are you saying?" And then he took his head in his hands. "Oh, Sasha,

Sasha, and I was convinced the Germans would win! That's what did me in!" There you are! He was one of the "organizers of victory," but each day he believed in the Germans' success and awaited their inevitable arrival. Not because he loved them, but simply because he had so sober an insight into our economy (which I, of course, knew nothing about and therefore believed in).

All of us in the cell were deeply depressed, but none of us was so crushed as Z——v, none took his arrest as so profound a tragedy. He learned from us that he would get no more than a *tenner*, that during his years in camp he would, of course, be a work superintendent, and that he would not have to experience real suffering, as indeed he never did. But this did not comfort him in the least. He was too stricken by the collapse of such a glorious life. After all, it was his one and only life on earth, and no one else's, which had interested him all his thirty-six years. And more than once, sitting on his cot in front of the table, propping his pudgy head on his short, pudgy arm, he would start to sing quietly, in a singsong voice and with lost, befogged eyes:

> Forgotten and abandoned
> Since my young, early years,
> I was left a tiny orphan. . . .

He could never get any further than that. At that point, he would break into explosive sobs. All that bursting strength which could not break through the walls that enclosed him he turned inward, toward self-pity.

And toward pity for his wife. Every tenth day (since oftener was not allowed) his wife, long since unloved, brought him rich and bountiful food parcels—the whitest of white bread, butter, red caviar, veal, sturgeon. He would give each of us a sandwich and a twist of tobacco and then bend down to the provisions he had set before himself, delighting in odors and colors that contrasted vividly with the bluish potatoes of the old underground revolutionary Fastenko. Then his tears would start to pour again, redoubled. He recalled out loud his wife's tears, whole years of tears: some due to love notes she had found in his trousers, some to some woman's underpants in his overcoat pocket, stuffed there hurriedly in his automobile and forgotten. And when he was thus torn by burning self-pity, his armor of evil energy fell

away, and before us was a ruined and clearly a good person. I was astonished that he could sob so. The Estonian Arnold Susi, our cellmate with the gray bristles in his hair, explained it to me: "Cruelty is invariably accompanied by sentimentality. It is the law of complementaries. For example, in the case of the Germans, the combination is a national trait."

Fastenko, on the other hand, was the most cheerful person in the cell, even though, in view of his age, he was the only one who could not count on surviving and returning to freedom. Flinging an arm around my shoulders, he would say:

To *stand up* for the truth is nothing!
For truth you have to *sit* in jail!

Or else he taught me to sing this song from Tsarist hard-labor days:

And if we have to perish
In mines and prisons wet,
Our cause will ever find renown
In future generations yet.

And I believe this! May these pages help his faith come true!

■

The sixteen-hour days in our cell were short on outward events, but they were so interesting that I, for example, now find a mere sixteen minutes' wait for a trolley bus much more boring. There were no events worthy of attention, and yet by evening I would sigh because once more there had not been enough time, once more the day had flown. The events were trivial, but for the first time in my life I learned to look at them through a magnifying glass.

The most difficult hours in the day were the first two. At the rattle of the key in the lock (for at the Lubyanka there were no "swill troughs,"[13] and it was necessary to unlock the door even

13. Special large openings in the cell doors of many Russian prisons [known to the prisoners as "kormushki," meaning "swill troughs" or "fodder bins"]. Their lids dropped down to make tiny tables. Conversations with the jailers were carried on through these openings, food was handed through, and prison papers were shoved through for the prisoners to sign.

to shout: "Time to get up!"), we jumped up without lingering, made our beds, and sat down on them feeling empty and helpless, with the electric light still burning. This enforced wakefulness from 6 A.M. on—at a time when the brain was still lazy from sleep, the whole world seemed repulsive and all of life wrecked, and there was not a gulp of air in the cell—was particularly ludicrous for those who had been under interrogation all night and had only just been able to get to sleep. But don't try to steal extra sleep! If you should try to doze off, leaning slightly against the wall, or propped over the table as if studying the chessboard, or relaxing over a book lying conspicuously open on your knees, the key would sound a warning knock on the door, or, worse yet, the door with that rattling lock would suddenly open silently, since the Lubyanka jailers were specially trained to do just that, and like a spirit passing through a wall, the swift and silent shadow of the junior sergeant would take three steps into the cell, hook onto you as you slept, and maybe take you off to the punishment cell; or maybe they would take book privileges away from the whole cell or deprive everyone of their daily walk —a cruel, unjust punishment for all, and there were other punishments, too, in the black lines of the prison regulations. Read them! They hang in every cell. If, incidentally, you needed glasses to read, then you wouldn't be reading books or the sacred regulations either during those two starving hours. Eyeglasses were taken away every night, and it was evidently still "dangerous" for you to have them during those two hours when no one brought anything to the cell, and no one came to it. No one asked about anything, and no one was summoned—the interrogators were still sleeping sweetly. And the prison administration was just opening its eyes, coming to. Only the vertukhai, the turnkeys, were active and energetic, opening the peephole cover once a minute for inspection.[14]

But one procedure was carried out during those two hours: the morning trip to the toilet. When the guard roused us, he made an important announcement. He designated the person from our

14. During my time this word "vertukhai" had already come into wide currency for the jailers. It was said to have originated with Ukrainian guards who were always ordering: "Stoi, ta ne vertukhais!" And yet it is also worth recalling the English word for jailer, "turnkey," is "verti klyuch" in Russian. Perhaps a "vertukhai" here in Russia is also "one who turns the key."

cell who was to be entrusted with the responsibility of carrying out the latrine bucket. (In more isolated, ordinary prisons the prisoners had enough freedom of speech and self-government to decide this question themselves. But in the Chief Political Prison such an important event could not be left to chance.) So then you formed up in single file, hands behind your backs, and, at the head of the line, the responsible latrine-bucket-bearer carried chest high the two-gallon tin pail with a lid on it. When you reached your goal, you were locked in again, each having first been handed a small piece of paper, the size of two railway tickets. (At the Lubyanka this was not particularly interesting. The paper was blank and white. But there were enticing prisons where they gave you pages of books—and what reading that was! You could try to guess *whence* it came, read it over on both sides, digest the contents, evaluate the style—and when words had been cut in half that was particularly essential! You could trade with your comrades. In some places they handed out pages from the once progressive *Granat Encyclopedia*, and sometimes, it's awful to say it, from the *classics*, and I don't mean belles-lettres either. Visits to the toilet thus became a means of acquiring knowledge.)

But there's not that much to laugh at. We are dealing with that crude necessity which it is considered unsuitable to refer to in literature (although there, too, it has been said, with immortal adroitness: "Blessed is he who early in the morning . . ."). This allegedly natural start of the prison day set a trap for the prisoner that would grip him all day, a trap for his spirit—which was what hurt. Given the lack of physical activity in prison, and the meager food, and the muscular relaxation of sleep, a person was just not able to square accounts with nature immediately after rising. Then they quickly returned you to the cell and locked you up—until 6 P.M., or, in some prisons, until morning. At that point, you would start to get worried and worked up by the approach of the daytime interrogation period and the events of the day itself, and you would be loading yourself up with your bread ration and water and gruel, but no one was going to let you visit that glorious accommodation again, easy access to which *free people* are incapable of appreciating. This debilitating, banal need could make itself felt day after day shortly after the morning toilet trip and would then torment you the whole day long, op-

press you, rob you of the inclination to talk, read, think, and even of any desire to eat the meager food.

People in the cells sometimes discussed how the Lubyanka system and schedule, and those in other prisons as well, had come into being, whether through calculated brutality or as a matter of chance. My opinion is that both factors are involved. The rising time is, obviously, a matter of malicious intent, but much of the rest evolved automatically at first (which is true of many of the brutalities of life generally) and was then discovered by the powers that be to be useful and was therefore made permanent. The shifts change at 8 A.M. and 8 P.M., and it was more convenient for everyone to take the prisoners to the toilet at the end of a shift. (Letting them out singly in the middle of the day was extra trouble and meant extra precautions, and no one got paid for that.) The same was true of the business with eyeglasses: Why should one worry about that at 6 A.M.? They could be returned to the owners just before the end of the shift instead.

So now we heard them being brought around—doors were being opened. We could guess whether someone wore them in the cell next door. (And didn't your codefendant wear spectacles? But we didn't feel up to knocking out a message on the wall. This was punished very severely.) A moment later they would bring the eyeglasses to our cell. Fastenko used them only for reading. But Susi needed them all the time. He could stop squinting once he'd put them on. Thanks to his horn-rimmed glasses and straight lines above the eyes, his face became severe, perspicacious, exactly the face of an educated man of our century as we might picture it to ourselves. Back before the Revolution he had studied at the Faculty of History and Philology of the University of Petrograd, and throughout his twenty years in independent Estonia he had preserved intact the purest Russian speech, which he spoke like a native. Later, in Tartu, he had studied law. In addition to Estonian, he spoke English and German, and through all these years he continued to read the London *Economist* and the German scientific "Berichte" summaries. He had studied the constitutions and the codes of law of various countries—and in our cell he represented Europe worthily and with restraint. He had been a leading lawyer in Estonia and been known as "kuldsuu"—meaning "golden-tongued."

There was new activity in the corridor. A free-loader in a gray smock—a husky young fellow who had certainly not been at the front—brought a tray with our five bread rations and ten lumps of sugar. Our cell stoolie hovered over them, even though we would inevitably cast lots for them—which we did because every least detail of this was important: the heel of the loaf, for instance, and the number of smaller pieces needed to make the total weight come out right, and how the crust adheres, or doesn't, to the inside of the bread—and it was better that fate should decide.[15] But the stoolie felt he just had to hold everything in his hands for at least a second so that some bread and sugar molecules would cling to his palms.

That pound of unrisen wet bread, with its swamplike sogginess of texture, made half with potato flour, was our *crutch* and the main event of the day. Life had begun! The day had begun—this was when it began! And everyone had countless problems. Had he allocated his bread ration wisely the day before? Should he cut it with a thread? Or break it up greedily? Or slowly, quietly nip off pieces one by one? Should he wait for tea or pile into it right now? Should he leave some for dinner or finish it off at lunch? And how much?

In addition to these wretched dilemmas, what wide-ranging discussions and arguments went on (for our tongues had been liberated and with bread we were once more men) provoked by this one-pound chunk in our hand, consisting more of water than of grain. (Incidentally, Fastenko explained that the workers of Moscow were eating the very same bread at that time.) And, generally speaking, was there any real breadgrain in this bread at all? And what additives were in it? (There was at least one person in every cell who knew all about additives, for, after all, who hadn't eaten them during these past decades?) Discussions and reminiscences began. About the white bread they had baked back in the twenties—springy round loaves, like sponge cake inside, with a buttery reddish-brown top crust and a bottom crust that still had a trace of ash from the coals of the hearth—that bread had

15. Where indeed in our country did this casting of lots not happen? It was the result of our universal and endless hunger. In the army, all rations were divided up the same way. And the Germans, who could hear what was going on from their trenches, teased us about it: "Who gets it? The political commissar!"

vanished for good! Those born in 1930 would never know what *bread* is. Friends, this is a forbidden subject! We agreed not to say one word about *food.*

Once again there was movement in the corridor—tea was being brought around. A new young tough in a gray smock carrying pails. We put our teapot out in the corridor and he poured straight into it from a pail without a spout—into the teapot and onto the runner and the floor beneath it. And the whole corridor was polished like that of a first-class hotel.[16]

And that was all they gave us. Whatever cooked food we got would be served at 1 P.M. and at 4 P.M., one meal almost on the heels of the other. You could then spend the next twenty-one hours remembering it. (And that wasn't prison brutality either: it was simply a matter of the kitchen staff having to do its work as quickly as possible and leave.)

At nine o'clock the morning check-up took place. For a long while beforehand, we could hear especially loud turns of the key and particularly sharp knocks on the doors. Then one of the duty lieutenants for the whole floor would march forward and enter, almost as erect as if he were standing at attention. He would take two steps forward and look sternly at us. We would be on our feet. (We didn't even dare remember that political prisoners were once not required to rise.) It was no work at all to count us—he could do it in a glance—but this was a moment for testing our rights. For we did have some rights, after all, although we did not really know them, and it was his job to hide them from us. The whole strength of the Lubyanka training showed itself in a totally machinelike manner: no expression on the face, no inflection, not a superfluous word.

And which of our rights did we know about? A request to have our shoes repaired. An appointment with the doctor. Although if they actually took you to the doctor, you would not be happy

16. Soon the biologist Timofeyev-Ressovsky, whom I have already mentioned, would be brought here from Berlin. There was nothing at the Lubyanka, it appeared, which so offended him as this spilling on the floor. He considered it striking evidence of the lack of professional pride on the part of the jailers, and of all of us in our chosen work. He multiplied the 27 years of Lubyanka's existence as a prison by 730 times (twice for each day of the year), and then by 111 cells—and he would seethe for a long time because it was easier to spill boiling water on the floor 2,188,000 times and then come and wipe it up with a rag the same number of times than to make pails with spouts.

about the consequences. There the machinelike Lubyanka manner would be particularly striking. He didn't ask: "What's your trouble?" That would take too many words, and one couldn't pronounce the phrase without any inflection. He would ask curtly: "Troubles?" And if you began to talk at too great length about your ailment, he would cut you off. It was clear anyway. A toothache? Extract it. You could have arsenic. A filling? We don't fill teeth here. (That would have required additional appointments and created a somewhat humane atmosphere.)

The prison doctor was the interrogator's and executioner's right-hand man. The beaten prisoner would come to on the floor only to hear the doctor's voice: "You can continue, the pulse is normal." After a prisoner's five days and nights in a punishment cell the doctor inspects the frozen, naked body and says: "You can continue." If a prisoner is beaten to death, he signs the death certificate: "Cirrhosis of the liver" or "Coronary occlusion." He gets an urgent call to a dying prisoner in a cell and he takes his time. And whoever behaves differently is not kept on in the prison.[17]

But our *stoolie* was better informed about his rights. (According to him he had already been under interrogation eleven months. And he was taken to interrogation only during the day.) He spoke up and asked for an appointment with the prison chief. What, the chief of the whole Lubyanka? Yes. His name was taken down. (And in the evening, after taps, when the interrogators were already in their offices, he was summoned. And he returned with some makhorka.) This was very crude, of course, but so far they had not been able to think up anything better. It would have been a big expense to convert entirely to microphones in the walls and impossible to listen in on all 111 cells for whole days at a time. Who would do it? Stool pigeons were cheaper and would continue to be used for a long time to come. But Kramarenko had a hard time with us. Sometimes he eavesdropped so hard that the sweat poured from him, and we could see from his face that he didn't understand what we were saying.

There was one additional right—the privilege of writing applications and petitions (which replaced freedom of the press, of assembly, and of the ballot, all of which we had lost when we

17. Dr. F. P. Gaaz would have earned nothing extra in our country.

left freedom). Twice a month the morning duty officer asked: "Who wants to write a petition?" And they listed everyone who wanted to. In the middle of the day they would lead you to an individual box and lock you up in it. In there, you could write whomever you pleased: the Father of the Peoples, the Central Committee of the Party, the Supreme Soviet, Minister Beria, Minister Abakumov, the General Prosecutor, the Chief Military Prosecutor, the Prison Administration, the Investigation Department. You could complain about your arrest, your interrogator, even the chief of the prison! In each and every case your petition would have no effect whatever. It would not be stapled into any file, and the most senior official to read it would be your own interrogator. However, you were in no position to prove this. In fact, it was rather more likely that he would *not read it,* because no one would be able to read it. On a piece of paper measuring seven by ten centimeters—in other words, three by four inches—a little larger than the paper given you each morning at the toilet, with a pen broken in the middle or bent into a hook, and an inkwell with pieces of rag in it and ink diluted with water, you would just be able to scratch out "Petit . . ." Then the letters would all run together on the cheap paper, "ion" couldn't be worked into the line, and everything would come through on the other side of the sheet.

You might have still other rights, but the duty officer would keep quiet about them. And you wouldn't be losing much, truth to tell, even if you didn't find out about them.

The check-up came and went. And the day began. The interrogators were already arriving there somewhere. The turnkey would summon one of us with a great air of secrecy; he called out the first letter of the name only. Like this: "Whose name begins with 'S'?" and: "Whose name begins with 'F'?" Or perhaps: "Whose begins with 'M'?—with 'Am'?" And you yourself had to be quick-witted enough to recognize that it was you he wanted and offer yourself as a victim. This system was introduced to prevent mistakes on the jailer's part. He might have called out a name in the wrong cell, and that way we might have found out who else was in prison. And yet, though cut off from the entire prison, we were not deprived of news from other cells. Because they tried to crowd in as many prisoners as possible, they shuffled

them about from cell to cell, and every newcomer brought all his accumulated experience to his new cell. Thus it was that we, imprisoned on the fourth floor, knew all about the cellar cells, about the boxes on the first floor, about the darkness on the second floor, where the women were all kept, about the split-level arrangement of the fifth, and about the biggest cell of all on the fifth floor—No. 111. Before my time, the children's writer Bondarin had been a prisoner in our cell, and before that he had been on the women's floor with some Polish correspondent or other, who had previously been a cellmate of Field Marshal von Paulus—and that was how we learned all the details about von Paulus.

The period for being summoned to interrogation passed. And for those left in the cell a long, pleasant day stretched ahead, lightened by opportunities and not overly darkened by duties. Duties could include sterilizing the cots with a blow torch twice a month. (At the Lubyanka, matches were categorically forbidden to prisoners; to get a light for a cigarette we had to signal patiently with a finger when the peephole was opened, thus asking the jailer for a light. But blow torches were entrusted to us without hesitation.) And once a week we might be called into the corridor to have our faces clipped with a dull clipper—allegedly a right but strongly resembling a duty. And one might be assigned the duty of cleaning the parquet floor in the cell. (Z——v always avoided this work because it was beneath his dignity, like any other work, in fact.) We got out of breath quickly because we were underfed; otherwise we would have considered this duty a privilege. It was such gay, lively work—pushing the brush forward with one's bare foot, torso pulled back, and then turn about; forward-back, forward-back, and forget all your grief! Shiny as a mirror! A Potemkin prison!

Besides, we didn't have to go on being overcrowded in our old Cell 67 any longer. In the middle of March they added a sixth prisoner to our number, and since here in the Lubyanka they did not fill all the cells with board bunks, nor make you sleep on the floor, they transferred all of us into a beauty of a cell—No. 53. (I would advise anyone who has not yet been in it to pay it a visit.) This was not a cell. It was a palace chamber set aside as a sleeping apartment for distinguished travelers! The Rossiya Insurance Company, without a thought for economy, had raised the

height of the ceiling in this wing to sixteen and a half feet.[18] (Oh, what four-story bunks the chief of counterintelligence at the front would have slapped in here. And he could have gotten one hundred people in, results guaranteed.) And the window! It was such an enormous window that standing on its sill the jailer could hardly reach the "fortochka," that hinged ventilation pane. One section of this window alone would have made a fine whole window in an ordinary house. Only the riveted steel sheets of the *muzzle* closing off four-fifths of it reminded us that we were not in a palace after all.

Nonetheless, on clear days, above this muzzle, from the wall of the Lubyanka courtyard, from some windowpane or other on the sixth or seventh floor, we now and then got a pale reflection of a ray of sunlight. To us it was a real ray of sunlight—a living, dear being! We followed with affection its climb up the wall. And every step it made was filled with meaning, presaging the time of our daily outing in the fresh air, counting off several half-hours before lunch. Then, just before lunch, it disappeared.

And our rights included being let out for a walk, reading books, telling one another about the past, listening and learning, arguing and being educated! And we would be rewarded by a lunch that included two courses! Too good to be true!

The walk was bad on the first three floors of the Lubyanka. The prisoners were let out into a damp, low-lying little courtyard —the bottom of a narrow well between the prison buildings. But the prisoners on the fourth and fifth floors, on the other hand, were taken to an eagle's perch—on the roof of the fifth floor. It had a concrete floor; there were concrete walls three times the height of a man; we were accompanied by an unarmed jailer; on the watch tower was a sentinel with an automatic weapon. But the air was real and the sky was real! "Hands behind your back! Line up in pairs! No talking! No stopping!" Such were the commands, but they forgot to forbid us to throw back our heads. And, of course, we did just that. Here one could see not a re-

18. This company acquired a piece of Moscow earth that was well acquainted with blood. The innocent Vereshchagin was torn to pieces in 1812 on Furkasovsky, near the Rostopchin house. And the murderess and serf-owner Saltychikha lived—and killed serfs—on the other side of the Bolshaya Lubyanka. (*Po Moskve* [*In Moscow*], edited by N. A. Geinike and others, Moscow, Sabashnikov Publishers, 1917, p. 231.)

flected, not a secondhand Sun, but the real one! The real, eternally living Sun itself! Or its golden diffusion through the spring clouds.

Spring promises everyone happiness—and tenfold to the prisoner. Oh, April sky! It didn't matter that I was in prison. Evidently, they were not going to shoot me. And in the end I would become wiser here. I would come to understand many things here, Heaven! I would correct my mistakes yet, O Heaven, not for *them* but for you, Heaven! I had come to understand those mistakes here, and I would correct them!

As if from a pit, from the far-off lower reaches, from Dzerzhinsky Square, the hoarse earthly singing of the automobile horns rose to us in a constant refrain. To those who were dashing along to the tune of those honkings, they seemed the trumpets of creation, but from here their insignificance was very clear.

The walk in the fresh air lasted only twenty minutes, but how much there was about it to concern oneself with; how much one had to accomplish while it lasted.

In the first place, it was very interesting to try to figure out the layout of the entire prison while they were taking you there and back, and to calculate where those tiny hanging courtyards were, so that at some later date, out in freedom, one could walk along the square and spot their location. We made many turns on the way there, and I invented the following system: Starting from the cell itself, I would count every turn to the right as plus one, and every turn to the left as minus one. And, no matter how quickly they made us turn, the idea was not to try to *picture* it hastily to oneself, but to count up the total. If, in addition, through some staircase window, you could catch a glimpse of the backs of the Lubyanka water nymphs, half-reclining against the pillared turret which hovered over the square itself, and you could remember the exact point in your count when this happened, then back in the cell you could orient yourself and figure out what your own window looked out on.

And during that outdoor walk you concentrated on breathing as much fresh air as possible.

There, too, alone beneath that bright heaven, you had to imagine your bright future life, sinless and without error.

There, too, was the best place of all to talk about the most dangerous subjects. It didn't matter that conversation during the

walk was forbidden. One simply had to know how to manage it. The compensation was that in all likelihood you could not be overheard either by a stoolie or by a microphone.

During these walks I tried to get into a pair with Susi. We talked together in the cell, but we liked to try talking about the main things here. We hadn't come together quickly. It took some time. But he had already managed to tell me a great deal. I acquired a new capability from him: to accept patiently and purposefully things that had never had any place in my own plans and had, it seemed, no connection at all with the clearly outlined direction of my life. From childhood on, I had somehow known that my objective was the history of the Russian Revolution and that nothing else concerned me. To understand the Revolution I had long since required nothing beyond Marxism. I cut myself off from everything else that came up and turned my back on it. And now fate brought me together with Susi. He breathed a completely different sort of air. And he would tell me passionately about his own interests, and these were Estonia and democracy. And although I had never expected to become interested in Estonia, much less bourgeois democracy, I nevertheless kept listening and listening to his loving stories of twenty free years in that modest, work-loving, small nation of big men whose ways were slow and set. I listened to the principles of the Estonian constitution, which had been borrowed from the best of European experience, and to how their hundred-member, one-house parliament had worked. And, though the *why* of it wasn't clear, I began to like it all and store it all away in my experience.[19] I listened willingly to their fatal history: the tiny Estonian anvil had, from way, way back, been caught between two hammers, the Teutons and the Slavs. Blows showered on it from East and West in turn; there was no end to it, and there still isn't. And there was the well-known (totally unknown) story of how we Russians wanted to take them over in one fell swoop in 1918, but they refused to yield. And how, later on, Yudenich spoke contemptuously of their Finnish heritage, and we ourselves christened them "White Guard Bandits." Then the Estonian gymnasium students enrolled as volunteers. We struck at Estonia again in 1940, and again in

19. Susi remembered me later as a strange mixture of Marxist and democrat. Yes, things were wildly mixed up inside me at that time.

1941, and again in 1944. Some of their sons were conscripted by the Russian Army, and others by the German Army, and still others ran off into the woods. The elderly Tallinn intellectuals discussed how they might break out of that iron ring, break away somehow, and live for themselves and by themselves. Their Premier might, possibly, have been Tief, and their Minister of Education, say, Susi. But neither Churchill nor Roosevelt cared about them in the least; but "Uncle Joe" did. And during the very first nights after the Soviet armies entered Tallinn, all these dreamers were seized in their Tallinn apartments. Fifteen of them were imprisoned in various cells of the Moscow Lubyanka, one in each, and were charged under Article 58-2 with the criminal desire for national self-determination.

Each time we returned to the cell from our walk was like being arrested again. Even in our very special cell the air seemed stifling after the outdoors. And it would have been good to have a snack afterward too. But it was best not to think about it—not at all. It was bad if one of the prisoners who received food parcels tactlessly spread out his treasures at the wrong time and began to eat. All right, we'll develop self-control! It was bad, too, to be betrayed by the author of the book you were reading—if he began to drool over food in the greatest detail. Get away from me, Gogol! Get away from me, Chekhov, too! They both had too much food in their books. "He didn't really feel like eating, but nevertheless he ate a helping of veal and drank some beer." The son-of-a-bitch! It was better to read spiritual things! Dostoyevsky was the right kind of author for prisoners to read! Yet even in Dostoyevsky you could find that passage "The children went hungry. For several days they had seen nothing but bread and *sausage*."

The Lubyanka library was the prison's principal ornament. True, the librarian was repulsive—a blond spinster with a horsy build, who did everything possible to make herself ugly. Her face was so whitened that it looked like a doll's immobile mask; her lips were purple; and her plucked eyebrows were black. (You might say that was her own business, but we would have enjoyed it more if she had been a charmer. However, perhaps the chief of the Lubyanka had already taken that into consideration?) But here was a wonder: once every ten days, when she came to

take away our books, she listened to our requests for new ones! She heard us out in that same machinelike, inhuman Lubyanka manner, and it was impossible to judge whether she had heard the authors' names or the titles, whether, indeed, she had heard our words at all. She would leave, and we would experience several hours of nervous but happy expectation. During those hours all the books we had returned were leafed through and checked. They were examined in case we had left pinpricks or dots underneath certain letters—for there was such a method of clandestine intramural communication—or we had underlined passages we liked with a fingernail. We were worried even though we were totally innocent. They might come to us and say that they had discovered pinpricks. They were always right, of course; and, as always, no proof was required. And on that basis we could be deprived of books for three months—if, indeed, they didn't put the whole cell on a punishment-cell regime. It would be very sad to have to do without books during the best and brightest of our prison months, before we were tossed into the pit of camp. Indeed, we were not only afraid; we actually trembled, just as we had in youth after sending a love letter, while we waited for an answer. Will it come or not? And what will it say?

Then at last the books arrived and determined the pattern of the next ten days. They would decide whether we would chiefly concentrate on reading or, if they had brought us trash, be spending more time in conversation. They brought exactly as many books as there were people in the cell, this being the sort of calculation appropriate to a bread cutter and not a librarian: one book for one person, six books for six persons. The cells with the largest number of prisoners were the best off.

Sometimes the spinster would fill our orders miraculously. But even when she was careless about them, things could turn out interestingly. Because the library of the Big Lubyanka was unique. In all probability it had been assembled out of confiscated private libraries. The bibliophiles who had collected those books had already rendered up their souls to God. But the main thing was that while State Security had been busy censoring and emasculating all the libraries of the nation for decades, it forgot to dig in its own bosom. Here, in its very den, one could read Zamyatin, Pilnyak, Panteleimon Romanov, and any volume at all of the com-

plete works of Merezhkovsky. (Some people wisecracked that they allowed us to read forbidden books because they already regarded us as dead. But I myself think that the Lubyanka librarians hadn't the faintest concept of what they were giving us—they were simply lazy and ignorant.)

We used to read intensively during the hours before lunch. But it sometimes happened that a single phrase would get you going and drive you to pace from window to door, from door to window. And you would want to show somebody what you had read and explain what it implied, and then an argument would get started. It was a time for sharp arguments, as well!

I often argued with Yuri Y.

■

On that March morning when they led the five of us into palatial Cell 53, they had just added a sixth prisoner to our group.

He entered, it seemed, like a spirit, and his shoes made no noise against the floor. He entered and, not sure that he could stay on his feet, leaned against the door frame. The bulb had been turned off in the cell and the morning light was dim. However, the newcomer did not have his eyes wide open. He squinted, and he kept silent.

The cloth of his military field jacket and trousers did not identify him as coming from the Soviet, or the German, or the Polish, or the English Army. The structure of his face was elongated. There was very little Russian in it. And he was painfully thin. And not only very thin but very tall.

We spoke to him in Russian—and he kept silent. Susi addressed him in German—he still kept silent. Fastenko tried French and English—with the same result. Only gradually did a smile appear on his emaciated, yellow, half-dead face—the only such smile I had ever seen in my life.

"Pee–eeple," he uttered weakly, as if he were coming out of a faint, or as if he had been waiting all night long to be executed. And he reached out his weak, emaciated hand. It held a small bundle tied up in a rag. Our stoolie understood instantly what was in it, threw himself on it, grabbed it, and opened it up on the table. There was half a pound of light tobacco. He had instantly man-

aged to roll himself a cigarette four times the size of an ordinary one.

Thus, after three weeks' confinement in a cellar box, Yuri Nikolayevich Y. made his appearance in our cell.

From the time of the 1929 incidents on the Chinese Eastern Railroad, the song had been sung throughout the land:

> Its steel breast brushing aside our enemies,
> The *27th* stands on guard!

The chief of artillery of this 27th Infantry Division, formed back in the Civil War, was the Tsarist officer Nikolai Y. (I remembered the name because it was the name of one of the authors of our artillery textbook.) In a heated freight car that had been converted into living quarters, and always accompanied by his wife, this artillery officer had crossed and recrossed the Volga and the Urals, sometimes moving east and sometimes west. It was in this heated freight car that his son, Yuri, born in 1917, and twin brother, therefore, of the Revolution itself, spent his first years.

That was a long time ago. Since then his father had settled in Leningrad, in the Academy, and lived well and frequented high circles, and the son graduated from the officer candidate school. During the Finnish War, Yuri wanted desperately to fight for the Motherland, and friends of his father got him an appointment as an aide on an army staff. Yuri did not have to crawl on his stomach to destroy the Finns' concrete artillery emplacements, nor get trapped and encircled on a scouting mission, nor freeze in the snow under sniper bullets—but his service was nevertheless rewarded, not with some ordinary decoration, but with the Order of the Red Banner, which fitted neatly on his field shirt. Thus he completed the Finnish War in full consciousness of its justice and his own part in it.

But he didn't have things so easy in the next war. The battery he commanded was surrounded near Luga. They scattered and were caught and driven off into prisoner-of-war camps. Yuri found himself in a concentration camp for officers near Vilnius.

In every life there is one particular event that is decisive for the entire person—for his fate, his convictions, his passions. Two years in that camp shook Yuri up once and for all. It is impossible

to catch with words or to circumvent with syllogisms what that camp was. That was a camp to die in—and whoever did not die was compelled to reach certain conclusions.

Among those who could survive were the Ordners—the internal camp police or Polizei—chosen from among the prisoners. Of course, Yuri did not become an Ordner. The cooks managed to survive too. The translators could survive also—they needed them. But though Yuri had a superb command of conversational German, he concealed this fact. He realized that a translator would have to betray his fellow prisoners. One could also postpone dying by digging graves, but others stronger and more dexterous got those jobs. Yuri announced that he was an artist. And, actually, as part of his varied education at home, he had been given lessons in painting. Yuri didn't paint badly in oils, and only his desire to follow in his father's footsteps—for he had been proud of his father—had kept him from entering art school.

Together with an elderly artist (I regret that I don't remember his name) he occupied a separate room in the barracks. And there Yuri painted for nothing schmaltzy pictures such as *Nero's Feast* and the *Chorus of Elves* and the like for the German officers on the commandant's staff. In return, he was given food. The slops for which the POW officers stood in line with their mess tins from 6 A.M. on, while the Ordners beat them with sticks and the cooks with ladles, were not enough to sustain life. At evening, Yuri could see from the windows of their room the one and only picture for which his artistic talent had been given him: the evening mist hovering above a swampy meadow encircled by barbed wire; a multitude of bonfires; and, around the bonfires, beings who had once been Russian officers but had now become beastlike creatures who gnawed the bones of dead horses, who baked patties from potato rinds, who smoked manure and were all swarming with lice. Not all those two-legged creatures had died as yet. Not all of them had yet lost the capacity for intelligible speech, and one could see in the crimson reflections of the bonfires how a belated understanding was dawning on those faces which were descending to the Neanderthal.

Wormwood on the tongue! That life which Yuri had preserved was no longer precious to him for its own sake. He was not one of those who easily agree to forget. No, if he was going to survive, he was obliged to draw certain conclusions.

It was already clear to them that the Germans were not the heart of the matter, or at least not the Germans alone; that among the POW's of many nationalities only the Soviets lived like this and died like this. None were worse off than the Soviets. Even the Poles, even the Yugoslavs, existed in far more tolerable conditions; and as for the English and the Norwegians, they were inundated by the International Red Cross with parcels from home. They didn't even bother to line up for the German rations. Wherever there were Allied POW camps next door, their prisoners, out of kindness, threw our men handouts over the fence, and our prisoners jumped on these gifts like a pack of dogs on a bone.

The Russians were carrying the whole war on their shoulders —and this was the Russian lot. Why?

Gradually, explanations came in from here and there: it turned out that the U.S.S.R. did not recognize as binding Russia's signature to the Hague Convention on war prisoners. That meant that the U.S.S.R. accepted no obligations at all in the treatment of war prisoners and took no steps for the protection of its own soldiers who had been captured.[20] The U.S.S.R. did not recognize the International Red Cross. The U.S.S.R. did not recognize its own soldiers of the day before: it did not intend to give them any help as POW's.

And the heart of Yuri, enthusiastic twin of the October Revolution, grew cold. In their barracks room, he and the elderly artist clashed and argued. It was difficult for Yuri to accept. Yuri resisted. But the old man kept peeling off layer after layer. What was it all about? Stalin? But wasn't it too much to ascribe everything to Stalin, to those stubby hands? He who draws a conclusion only halfway fails to draw it at all. What about the rest of them? The ones right next to Stalin and below him, and everywhere around the country—all those whom the Motherland had authorized to speak for it?

What is the right course of action if our mother has sold us to

20. We did not recognize that 1907 Convention until 1955. Incidentally, in his diary for 1915, Melgunov reports *rumors* that Russia would not let aid go through for its prisoners in Germany and that their living conditions were worse than those of all other Allied prisoners—simply in order to prevent *rumors* about the good life of war prisoners inducing our soldiers to surrender willingly. There was some sort of continuity of ideas here. (Melgunov, *Vospominaniya i Dnevniki,* Vol. I, pp. 199 and 203.)

the gypsies? No, even worse, thrown us to the dogs? Does she really remain our mother? If a wife has become a whore, are we really still bound to her in fidelity? A Motherland that betrays its soldiers—is that really a Motherland?

And everything turned topsy-turvy for Yuri! He used to take pride in his father—now he cursed him! For the first time he began to consider that his father had, in essence, betrayed his oath to that army in which he had been brought up—had betrayed it in order to help establish this system which now betrayed its own soldiers. Why, then, was Yuri bound by his own oath to that traitorous system?

When, in the spring of 1943, recruiters from the first Byelorussian "legions" put in an appearance, some POW's signed up with them to escape starvation. Yuri went with them out of conviction, with a clear mind. But he didn't stay in the legion for long. As the saying goes: "Once they've skinned you, there's no point in grieving over the wool." By this time Yuri had given up hiding his excellent knowledge of German, and soon a certain Chief, a German from near Kassel, who had been assigned to create an espionage school with an accelerated wartime output, took Yuri as his right-hand man. And that was how Yuri began the downward slide he had not foreseen. That was how things got turned around. Yuri passionately desired to free his Motherland, and what did they do but shove him into training spies? The Germans had their own plans. Just where could one draw the line? Which step was the fatal one? Yuri became a lieutenant in the German Army. He traveled through Germany, in German uniform, spent some time in Berlin, visited Russian émigrés, and read authors like Bunin, Nabokov, Aldanov, Amfiteatrov, whose works were forbidden at home. Yuri had anticipated that in all their writing, in Bunin's, for example, the blood flowing from Russia's living wounds would pour from every page. What was wrong with them? To what did they devote their unutterably precious freedom? To the female body, to ecstasy, sunsets, the beauty of noble brows, to anecdotes going back to dusty years. They wrote as if there had been no revolution in Russia, or as if it were too complex for them to explain. They left it to young Russian people to find for themselves what was highest in life. And Yuri dashed back and forth, in a hurry to see, in a hurry to know, and mean-

while, in accordance with ancient Russian tradition, he kept drowning his confusion more and more often and more and more deeply in vodka.

What was their spy school really? It was, of course, not a real one. All they could be taught in six months was to master the parachute, the use of explosives, and the use of portable radios. The Germans put no special trust in them. In sending them across the lines they were simply whistling in the dark. And for those dying, hopelessly abandoned Russian POW's, those schools, in Yuri's opinion, were a good way out. The men ate their fill, got new warm clothing, and, in addition, had their pockets stuffed with Soviet money. The students (and their teachers) acted as if all this nonsense were genuine—as if they would actually carry out spying missions in the Soviet rear, blow up the designated objectives, get back in touch with the Germans via radio, and return to the German lines. But in reality in their eyes this school was simply a means of sidestepping death and captivity. They wanted to live, but not at the price of shooting their own compatriots at the front.[21] The Germans sent them across the front lines, and from then on their free choice depended on their own morality and conscience. They all threw away their TNT and radio apparatus immediately. The only point on which they differed was whether to surrender to the authorities immediately, like the snub-nosed "shhpy" I had encountered at army counterintelligence headquarters, or whether to get drunk first and have some fun squandering all that free money. None of them ever recrossed the front lines to the Germans.

Suddenly, as the new year of 1945 approached, one smart fellow did return and reported he had carried out his assignment. (Just go and check on it!) He created a sensation. The Chief hadn't the slightest doubt that SMERSH had sent him back and decided to shoot him. (The fate of a conscientious spy!) But Yuri insisted that he be given a decoration instead and held up as an

21. Of course, our Soviet interrogators did not accept this line of reasoning. What right did *they* have to want to live—at a time when privileged families in the Soviet rear lived well without collaborating? No one ever thought of considering that these boys had refused to take up German arms against their own people. For playing spies, they were nailed with the very worst and most serious charges of all—Article 58-6, plus sabotage with intent. This meant: to be held until dead.

example to the others taking the course. The returned "spy" invited Yuri to drink a quart of vodka with him and, crimson from drink, leaned across the table and disclosed: "Yuri Nikolayevich! The Soviet Command promises you forgiveness if you will come over to us immediately."

Yuri trembled. And that heart which had already grown hard, which had renounced everything, was flooded with warmth. The Motherland? Accursed, unjust, but nonetheless still precious! Forgiveness? And he could go back to his own family? And walk along Kamennoostrovsky in Leningrad? All right, so what? We are Russian! If you will forgive us, we will return, and we will behave ourselves, oh, how well! That year and a half since he had left the POW camp had not brought Yuri happiness. He did not repent, but he could see no future either. And when, while drinking, he encountered other such unrepentant Russians, he learned that they realized clearly that they had nothing to stand on. It wasn't real life. The Germans were twisting them to suit themselves. But now, when the Germans were obviously losing the war, Yuri had been offered an out. His Chief, who liked him, confided that he had a second estate in Spain which they could head for together if the German Reich went up in smoke. But there across the table sat his drunken compatriot, coaxing him at the risk of his own life: "Yuri Nikolayevich! The Soviet Command values your experience and knowledge. They want you to tell them about the organization of the German intelligence service."

For two weeks Yuri was torn by hesitation. But during the Soviet offensive beyond the Vistula, after he had led his school well out of the way, he ordered them to turn in to a quiet Polish farm, lined them all up, and declared: "I am going over to the Soviet side! There is a free choice for everyone!" And these sad-sack spies, with the milk hardly dry on their lips, who just one hour before had pretended loyalty to the German Reich, now cried out with enthusiasm: "Hurrah! Us too!" (They were shouting "hurrah" for their future lives at hard labor.)

Then the entire spy school hid until the arrival of the Soviet tanks; and then came SMERSH. Yuri saw his boys no more. They took him off by himself and gave him ten days to describe the whole history of the school, the programs, the sabotage assignments. He really thought that they valued his "experience

and knowledge." They were already talking about his going home to his family.

Only when he arrived at the Lubyanka did he realize that even in Salamanca he would have been closer to his native Neva. He could now await being shot, or, in any case, a sentence of certainly not less than twenty years.

So immutably does a human being surrender to the mist of the Motherland! Just as a tooth will not stop aching until the nerve is killed, so is it with us; we shall probably not stop responding to the call of the Motherland until we swallow arsenic. The lotus-eaters in the *Odyssey* knew of a certain lotus for that purpose. . . .

In all, Yuri spent three weeks in our cell. I argued with him during all those weeks. I said that our Revolution was magnificent and just; that only its 1929 distortion was terrible. He looked at me regretfully, compressing his nervous lips: before trying our hands at revolution, we should have exterminated the bedbugs in this country! (Sometimes, oddly, he and Fastenko arrived at the same conclusions, approaching them from such different beginnings.) I said there had been a long period in which the people in charge of everything important in our country had been people of unimpeachably lofty intentions, and totally dedicated. He said that from the very beginning they were all cut from the same cloth as Stalin. (We agreed that Stalin was a gangster.) I praised Gorky to the skies. What a smart man he had been! How correct his point of view! What a great artist he was! And Yuri parried. He was an insignificant, terribly boring personality! He invented himself; he invented his heroes; and his books were fabrications from beginning to end. Lev Tolstoi—he was the king of our literature.

As a result of these daily arguments, vehement because of our youth, he and I were never able to become really close or to discern and accept in each other more than we rejected.

They took him out of our cell; and since then, no matter how often I have inquired, I have found no one who was imprisoned with him in the Butyrki, and no one who encountered him in a transit prison. Even the rank-and-file Vlasov men have all disappeared without a trace, under the earth, most likely, and even now some of them do not have the documents they need in order to leave the northern wastes. But even among them, the fate of Yuri Y. was not a rank-and-file fate.

■

At long last our Lubyanka lunch arrived. Long before it got to us we could hear the cheery clatter in the corridor, and then, as in a restaurant, they brought in a tray with two aluminum plates—not bowls—for each prisoner. One plate held a ladleful of soup and the other a ladleful of the thinnest kind of thin gruel, with no fat in it.

In his first excitement, a prisoner couldn't get anything down his throat. There were those who didn't touch their bread for several days, who didn't know where to put it. But gradually one's appetite returned; and then a chronically famished state ensued that became almost uncontrollable. Then, if one managed to get it under control, one's stomach shrank and adapted itself to inadequate food, at which point the meager Lubyanka fare became just right. One needed to have self-control to achieve this, and also needed to stop looking around to see who might be eating something extra. All those extremely dangerous prison conversations about food had to be outlawed, and one had to try to lift oneself, as far as possible, into higher spheres. At the Lubyanka this was made easier by our being permitted two hours of rest after lunch—something else that was astonishingly resort-like. We lay down, our backs to the peephole, set up open books for appearance' sake, and dozed off. Sleep was forbidden, strictly speaking, and the guards could see that the pages of the books hadn't been turned for a long time. But ordinarily they did not knock during this period. (The explanation for this humanitarianism was that whoever wasn't resting during these hours was undergoing interrogation. Thus, for those who were stubborn, who had not signed the depositions, the contrast was unmistakable: they returned to the cell at the very end of the rest period.)

And sleep was the very best thing for hunger and anguish. One's organism cooled off, and the brain stopped recapitulating one's mistakes over and over again.

Then they brought in dinner—another ladle of gruel. Life was setting all its gifts before you. After that, you were not going to get anything to eat in the five or six hours before bedtime, but that was not so terrible; it was easy to get used to not eating in

the evenings. That has long been known in military medicine. And in reserve regiments they don't have anything to eat in the evening.

Then came the time for the evening visit to the toilet, for which, in all likelihood, you had waited, all atremble, all day. How relieved, how eased, the whole world suddenly became! How the great questions all simplified themselves at the same instant—did you feel it?

Oh, the weightless Lubyanka evenings! (Only weightless, incidentally, if you were not awaiting a night interrogation.) A weightless body, just sufficiently satisfied by soup so that the soul did not feel oppressed by it. What light, free thoughts! It was as if we had been lifted up to the heights of Sinai, and there the truth manifested itself to us from out the fire. Was it not of this that Pushkin dreamed:

I want to live to think and suffer!

And there we suffered, and we thought, and there was nothing else in our lives. How easy it turned out to be to attain that ideal.

Some evenings I would get involved in arguments, withdrawing from a chess game with Susi or from a book. Again I would have the sharpest quarrels with Yuri, because the questions were all explosive ones—for example, the question of the outcome of the war. The jailer, without any word or change of expression, would come in and pull down the dark-blue blackout blind on the window. And then, out there on the other side of the blind, evening Moscow would begin to send up salutes. And just as we could not see the salutes lighting up the heavens, we were unable to see the map of Europe. Yet we tried to picture it in all its details and to guess which cities had been taken. Yuri was especially tormented by those salutes. Appealing to fate to correct his own mistakes, he assured us that the war was by no means finished and that the Red Army and the Anglo-American forces would now go for each other's throats: that the real war would really begin now. The others in the cell took a greedy interest in this prediction. How would such a conflict end? Yuri claimed it would end with the easy destruction of the Red Army. (Would this result in our liberation or our execution?) I objected to this, and we got into heated arguments. It was his contention that our

army was worn down, bled white, poorly supplied, and, most importantly, that it would not fight with its usual determination against the Allies. I, however, insisted, on the basis of the units I had been familiar with, that the army was not so much worn down as experienced, that it had now become both strong and mean, and that in such an event it would crush the Allies even more thoroughly than it had the Germans. "Never," cried Yuri in a half-whisper. "And what about the Ardennes?" I answered in a half-whisper. Fastenko interrupted us, ridiculing us both, informing us that we did not understand the West and that no one, now or ever, could compel the Allied armies to fight against us.

However, in the evening we didn't want to argue so much as to hear something interesting that might bring us closer together, and to talk in a spirit of fellowship.

One favorite subject of conversation was prison traditions, *how it used to be in prison.* We had Fastenko and were therefore able to hear these stories at first hand. What dismayed us most of all was to learn that it had previously been an honor to be a political prisoner, and that it was not only their relatives who stuck by them and refused to renounce them, but that girls who had never even met them came to visit them, pretending for that purpose to be their fiancées. And what about the once universal tradition of gifts for the prisoners on holidays? No one in Russia ever broke the Lenten fast without first taking gifts for unknown prisoners to the common prison kitchen. They brought in Christmas hams, tarts, and kulichi—the special Russian Easter cakes. One poor old lady even used to bring a dozen colored Easter eggs; it made her feel better. And where had all that Russian generosity gone? It had been replaced by *political consciousness.* That was how cruelly and implacably they had terrified our people and cured them of taking thought for and caring for those who were suffering. Today it would seem silly to do such a thing. If it was proposed today that some institution organize a preholiday collection of gifts for prisoners in the local prison, it would be virtually considered an anti-Soviet revolt! That's how far we have gone along the road to being brutalized!

And what about those holiday gifts? Were they only a matter of tasty food? More importantly, those gifts gave the prisoners

the warm feeling that people in freedom were thinking about them and were concerned for them.

Fastenko told us that even in the Soviet period a Political Red Cross had existed. We found this difficult to imagine. It wasn't that we thought he was telling us an untruth. Somehow we just couldn't picture such a thing. He told us that Y. P. Peshkova, taking advantage of her personal immunity, had traveled abroad, collected money there (you'd not collect much here), and then seen to it that foodstuffs were bought in Russia for political prisoners who had no relatives. For all political prisoners? And he explained at this point that the KR's—the so-called "Counter-Revolutionaries"—engineers and priests, for example, weren't included, but only members of former political parties. Well, why didn't you say so right away? Yes, and then for the most part the Political Red Cross, except Peshkova, was itself liquidated and its staff imprisoned.

It was also very pleasant, on those evenings when one wasn't expecting interrogation, to talk about getting out of prison. Yes, they said there had been astonishing instances when they did release someone. One day they took Z——v from our cell, "with his things"—perhaps to free him? But his interrogation could not have been completed so swiftly. Ten days later he returned. They had dragged him off to Lefortovo. When he got there, he had evidently begun *to sign things* very quickly. So they brought him back to us. "Now if they *should* just release you," we would say to a fellow prisoner, "since your case, after all, isn't very serious, as you yourself say, then you must promise to go see my wife and, to show you've done it, tell her, let's say, to put two apples in my next parcel. . . . But there aren't any apples anywhere right now, so tell her to put in three bagels. But then there mightn't be any bagels in Moscow either. So all right, it will just have to be four potatoes!" (That's how the discussion went, and then they actually did take N. off, "with his things," and M. got four potatoes in his next parcel. Truly astonishing! It was more than a coincidence! So they had really let him go! And his case was much more serious than mine. So maybe soon . . . However, what really happened was that M.'s wife brought five potatoes, but one of them got crushed in her bag, and N. was in the hold of a ship en route to the Kolyma.)

And so it went. We talked about all kinds of things and recalled something amusing, and it was all very jolly and delightful to be among interesting people who were so different from those you used to spend your life with, and who came from outside your own circle of experience. Meanwhile the silent evening check-up had come and gone, and they had taken eyeglasses away and the light bulb had blinked three times. That meant that bedtime would be in five minutes.

Quick! Quick! Grab a blanket! Just as you never knew at the front when a hail of shells would begin to fall all around you, here you didn't know which would be your fateful interrogation night. And we would lie down with one arm on top of the blanket and try to expel the whirlwind of thought from our heads. Go to sleep!

And at a certain moment on an April evening, soon after we had seen Yuri off, the lock rattled. Hearts tightened. For whom had they come? Now the jailer would whisper: "Name with 'S'? Name with 'Z'?" But the guard did not whisper anything. The door closed. We raised our heads. There was a newcomer at the door: on the thin side, young, in a cheap blue suit and a dark-blue cap. He had nothing with him. He looked around in a state of confusion.

"What's the cell number?" he asked in alarm.

"Fifty-three."

He shuddered a bit.

"Are you from freedom?" we asked.

"No!" He shook his head in a painful sort of way.

"When were you arrested?"

"Yesterday morning."

We roared. He had a very gentle, innocent sort of face, and his eyebrows were nearly white.

"What for?"

(It was an unfair question. One could not really expect an answer.)

"Oh, I don't know. . . . Nothing much."

That was how they all replied. Everyone here was imprisoned because of nothing much. And to the newly arrested prisoner his own case always seemed especially nothing much.

"But anyway, what was it?"

"Well, you see, I wrote a proclamation. To the Russian people."

"Whaaat?"

(None of us had ever run into that sort of "nothing much.")

"Are they going to shoot me?" His face grew longer. He kept pulling at the visor of the cap he had still not taken off.

"Well, no, probably not," we reassured him. "They don't shoot anyone nowadays. They give out *tenners*—every time the clock strikes."

"Are you a worker? Or a white-collar employee?" asked the Social Democrat, true to his class principles.

"A worker."

Fastenko reached out a hand to him and triumphantly proclaimed to me: "You see, Aleksandr Isayevich, that's the mood of the working class!"

He turned away to go to sleep, assuming that there was nowhere else to go from there and nothing else to listen to.

But he was wrong.

"What do you mean, a proclamation? Just like that? Without any reason? In whose name was it issued?"

"In my own."

"And who are you?"

The newcomer smiled with embarrassment: "The Emperor, Mikhail."

An electric shock ran through us all. Once again we raised ourselves on our cots and looked at him. No, his shy, thin face was not in the least like the face of Mikhail Romanov. And then his age too . . .

"Tomorrow, tomorrow. Time to sleep now," said Susi sternly.

We went to sleep, confident that the two hours before the morning bread ration were not going to be boring.

They brought in a cot and bedding for the Emperor, and he lay down quietly next to the latrine bucket.

■

In 1916 a portly stranger, an elderly man with a light-brown beard, entered the home of the Moscow locomotive engineer Belov and said to the engineer's pious wife: "Pelageya! You have

a year-old son. Take good care of him for the Lord. The hour will come—and I will come to you again." Then he left.

Pelageya did not have the faintest idea who this man was. But he had spoken so clearly and authoritatively that her mother's heart accepted his word as law. And she cared for her child like the apple of her eye. Viktor grew up to be quiet, obedient, and pious; and he often saw visions of the angels and the Holy Virgin. But, as he grew up, these visions became less frequent. The elderly man did not come again. Viktor learned to be a chauffeur, and in 1936 he was taken into the army and sent off to Birobidzhan, where he was stationed in an auto transport company. He was not at all overly familiar or cheeky, and perhaps it was his quiet demeanor and modesty, so untypical of a chauffeur, which attracted a civilian girl employee. But the commander of his platoon was after the same girl and found himself out in the cold because of Viktor. At this time, Marshal Blücher came to their area for maneuvers and his personal chauffeur fell seriously ill. Blücher ordered the commander of the motor company to send him the best driver in the company; the company commander summoned the platoon commander, who immediately latched onto the idea of dumping his rival, Belov. (That's the way it often is in the army. The person who deserves promotion doesn't get it, and the person they want to get rid of does.) In addition, Belov was sober, a hard worker, and reliable—he wouldn't let them down.

Blücher liked Belov. So Belov stayed with him. Soon Blücher was summoned to Moscow on a plausible pretext. This was how they separated the marshal from his power base in the Far East before arresting him. He had brought his own chauffeur, Belov, to Moscow with him. Having lost his boss, Belov then landed in the Kremlin garage and began chauffeuring, sometimes for Mikhailov (of the Komsomol), sometimes for Lozovsky or somebody else in the leadership, and, finally, for Khrushchev. He had a close view of things—and he told us a lot, too, about the feasts, the morals, the security precautions. As a representative of the rank-and-file Moscow proletariat, he was also present at the trial of Bukharin in the House of the Unions. Of all those for whom he worked, he spoke well only of Khrushchev. Only in Khrushchev's home was the chauffeur seated at the family table instead of being put in the kitchen. Only there, in those years, did he

find the simplicity of the workingman's life preserved. Khrushchev, who enjoyed life hugely, also became attached to Viktor Alekseyevich, and in 1938, when he left for the Ukraine, he tried to get him to go along. "I would have stayed with Khrushchev forever," said Viktor Alekseyevich. But for some reason he felt he should remain in Moscow.

For a while in 1941, before the beginning of the war, he was not employed in the government garage and, having no one to protect him, he was taken into military service. But because his health was poor, he was not sent to the front but to a labor battalion. First they went on foot to Inza, to dig trenches and build roads there. After his secure and prosperous life of the previous few years he found it painful to have his nose shoved in the dirt. He drank a full draft of grief and poverty there, and on every side he saw not only that people had not begun to live better before the war, but that they were deeply impoverished. Just barely surviving himself, and released from the service because of illness, he returned to Moscow and again managed to get himself a job as chauffeur for Shcherbakov,[22] and after that for Sedin, People's Commissar of Petroleum. But Sedin embezzled funds to the tune of 35 million and was quietly removed. And Belov was once again out of a job driving for the leaders. He became a chauffeur at an automobile depot, and in his spare time he used to moonlight with his car on the road to Krasnaya Pakhra.

But his thoughts were already centered elsewhere. In 1943 he had been visiting his mother. She was doing the laundry and had gone out to the hydrant with her pails. The door opened and a portly stranger, an old man with a white beard, entered the house. He crossed himself at the ikon there, looked sternly at Belov, and said to him: "Hail, Mikhail. God gives you his blessing!" Belov replied: "My name is Viktor." "But," the old man continued, "you are destined to become Mikhail, the Emperor of Holy Russia!" Just then Viktor's mother returned and half-collapsed in fright, spilling her pails. It was the very same old man who had come to her twenty-seven years before. He had turned white in the meantime, but it was he. "God bless you,

22. He used to describe how the obese Shcherbakov hated to see people around when he arrived at his Informburo, so they temporarily removed all those who were working in the offices he had to walk through. Grunting because of his fat, he would lean down and pull back a corner of the carpet. And the whole Informburo caught it if he found any dust there.

Pelageya, you have preserved your son," said the old man. And he took the future Emperor aside, like a patriarch preparing to enthrone him, and announced to the astonished young man that in 1953 there would be a change in rule and that he would become Emperor of All Russia.[23] (That is why the number of our cell, 53, shocked him so.) To this end, the old man told him, he was to begin to gather his forces in 1948. The old man didn't instruct him as to how to gather his forces. He departed, and Viktor Alekseyevich didn't get around to asking.

All the peace and simplicity of his life were lost to him now. Perhaps some other individual would have recoiled from the ambitious program, but Viktor, as it happened, had rubbed shoulders with the highest of the high. He had seen all those Mikhailovs, Shcherbakovs, Sedins, and he had heard a lot from other chauffeurs, too, and he had gotten it clear in his own mind that nothing in the least unusual was required—in fact, just the reverse.

The newly anointed Tsar, quiet, conscientious, sensitive, like Fyodor Ivanovich, the last of the line of Ryurik, felt on his brow the heavy pressure of the crown of Monomakh. All around him were the people's poverty and grief, for which he had not until now borne any responsibility. Now all this lay upon his shoulders, and he was to blame for the fact that this misery still existed. It seemed strange to him to wait until 1948, and, therefore, in that very autumn of 1943, he wrote his first proclamation to the Russian people and read it to four of his fellow workers in the garage of the People's Commissariat of Petroleum.

We had surrounded Viktor Alekseyevich from early morning, and he had meekly told us all this. We had still not fathomed his childish trustfulness—we were absorbed in his unusual story and —it was our fault—we forgot to warn him about the stoolie. In fact, we never even thought for one minute that there was anything in the naïve and simple story he had told us that the interrogator didn't already know.

The instant the story ended, Kramarenko began demanding to be taken either to the "chief of the prison for tobacco" or else to the doctor. At any rate, they summoned him quickly. And as soon as he got there he *put the finger on* those four workers in

23. The prophetic old man made only one mistake. He confused the chauffeur with his former employer.

the garage of the People's Commissariat of Petroleum—whose existence no one would ever have suspected. (The next day, returning from his interrogation, Belov was astonished that the interrogator knew about them. And that's when it hit us.) Those workers had heard the proclamation and approved it all, and *no one had turned in* the Emperor! But he himself felt that it was too early, and he burned it.

A year passed. Viktor Alekseyevich was working as a mechanic in the garage of an automobile depot. In the fall of 1944, he again wrote a proclamation and gave it to ten people to read—chauffeurs and lathe operators. All of them approved it. *And no one turned him in.* (It was a surprising thing, indeed, that not one person in that group of ten had turned him in, in that period of ubiquitous stool pigeons! Fastenko had not been mistaken in his deductions about the "mood of the working class.") True, in this case the Emperor had used some innocent tricks. He had thrown out hints that a strong arm inside the government was on his side. And he had promised his supporters travel assignments to rally monarchic sentiment at the grass roots.

Months went by. The Emperor entrusted his secret to two girls at the garage. But this time there was no misfire. These girls turned out to be ideologically sound! And Viktor Alekseyevich's heart sank: he had a premonition of disaster. On the Sunday after the Annunciation he went to the market, carrying the proclamation with him. One of his sympathizers among the old workers saw him there and said: "Viktor, you ought to burn that piece of paper for the time being; how about it?" And Viktor felt clearly that he had written it too soon, and that he should burn it. "I'll burn it right now! You're right." And he started home to burn it. But right there in the market two pleasant young men called out to him: "Viktor Alekseyevich! Come along with us!" And they took him to the Lubyanka in a private car. When they got him there, they had been in such a hurry and were so excited that they didn't search him in the usual way, and there was a moment when the Emperor almost destroyed his proclamation in the toilet. But he decided that it would be the worse for him, that they would keep after him anyway to find out where it was. And they straightaway took him in an elevator up to a general and a colonel, and the general with his own hands grabbed the proclamation from Viktor's pocket.

However, it took only one interrogation for the Big Lubyanka to quiet down again. It turned out to be not so dangerous. Ten arrests in the garage of the auto depot and four in the garage of the People's Commissariat of Petroleum. The interrogation was turned over to a lieutenant colonel, who had a good laugh as he went through the proclamation:

"You write here, Your Majesty: 'In the first spring I will instruct my Minister of Agriculture to dissolve the collective farms.' But how are you going to divide up the tools and livestock? You haven't got it worked out yet. And then you also write: 'I am going to increase housing construction and house each person next to the place he works, and I am going to raise all the workers' wages.' And where are you going to find the money, Your Majesty? Are you going to have to run the money off on printing presses? You are going to abolish the *state loans.* And then, too: 'I am going to wipe the Kremlin from the face of the earth.' But where are you going to put your own government? What about the building of the Big Lubyanka? Would you like to take a tour of inspection and look it over?"

Many of the younger interrogators also stopped by to make fun of the Emperor of All Russia. They saw nothing except comedy in all this.

And it was not always easy for us in the cell to keep a straight face. "We hope you aren't going to forget us here in Cell No. 53," said Z——v, winking at the rest of us.

Everyone laughed at him.

Viktor Alekseyevich, with his white eyebrows and innocent simplicity and his callused hands, would treat us when he received boiled potatoes from his unfortunate mother, Pelageya, without ever dividing them into "yours" and mine": "Come on, comrades, eat up, eat up!"

He used to smile shyly. He understood perfectly well how uncontemporary and funny all this was—to be the Emperor of All Russia. But what could he do if God's choice had fallen on him?

They soon removed him from our cell.[24]

24. When they introduced me to Khrushchev in 1962, I wanted to say to him: "Nikita Sergeyevich! You and I have an acquaintance in common." But I told him something else, more urgent, on behalf of former prisoners.

■

Just before May 1 they took down the blackout shade on the window. The war was perceptibly coming to an end.

That evening it was quieter than ever before in the Lubyanka. It was, I remember, almost like the second day of Easter, since May Day and Easter came one after the other that year. All the interrogators were out in Moscow celebrating. No one was taken to interrogation. In the silence we could hear someone across the corridor protesting. They took him from the cell and into a box. By listening, we could detect the location of all the doors. They left the door of the box open, and they kept beating him a long time. In the suspended silence every blow on his soft and choking mouth could be heard clearly.

On May 2 a thirty-gun salute roared out. That meant a European capital. Only two had not yet been captured—Prague and Berlin. We tried to guess which it was.

On the ninth of May they brought us our dinner at the same time as our lunch—which was done at the Lubyanka only on May 1 and November 7.

And that is how we guessed that the war had ended.

That evening they shot off another thirty-gun salute. We then knew that there were no more capitals to be captured. And later that same evening one more salute roared out—forty guns, I seem to remember. And that was the end of all the ends.

Above the muzzle of our window, and from all the other cells of the Lubyanka, and from all the windows of all the Moscow prisons, we, too, former prisoners of war and former front-line soldiers, watched the Moscow heavens, patterned with fireworks and crisscrossed by the beams of searchlights.

Boris Gammerov, a young antitank man, already demobilized because of wounds, with an incurable wound in his lung, having been arrested with a group of students, was in prison that evening in an overcrowded Butyrki cell, where half the inmates were former POW's and front-line soldiers. He described this last salute of the war in a terse eight-stanza poem, in the most ordinary language: how they were already lying down on their board bunks, covered with their overcoats; how they were awakened by the

noise; how they raised their heads; squinted up at the muzzle—"Oh, it's just a salute"—and then lay down again:

And once again covered themselves with their coats.

With those same overcoats which had been in the clay of the trenches, and the ashes of bonfires, and been torn to tatters by German shell fragments.

That victory was not for us. And that spring was not for us either.

Chapter 6

■

That Spring

Through the windows of the Butyrki Prison every morning and evening in June, 1945, we could hear the brassy notes of bands not far away—coming from either Lesnaya Street or Novoslobodskaya. They kept playing marches over and over.

Behind the murky green "muzzles" of reinforced glass, we stood at the wide-open but impenetrable prison windows and listened. Were they military units that were marching? Or were they workers cheerfully devoting their free time to marching practice? We didn't know, but the rumor had already gotten through to us that preparations were under way for a big Victory Parade on Red Square on June 22—the fourth anniversary of the beginning of the war.

The foundation stones of a great building are destined to groan and be pressed upon; it is not for them to crown the edifice. But even the honor of being part of the foundation was denied those whose doomed heads and ribs had borne the first blows of this war and thwarted the foreigners' victory, and who were now abandoned for no good reason.

"Joyful sounds mean nought to the traitor."

That spring of 1945 was, in our prisons, predominantly the spring of the Russian *prisoners of war*. They passed through the prisons of the Soviet Union in vast dense gray shoals like ocean herring. The first trace of those schools I glimpsed was Yuri Y. But I was soon entirely surrounded by their purposeful motion, which seemed to know its own fated design.

Not only war prisoners passed through those cells. A wave of those who had spent any time in Europe was rolling too: émigrés from the Civil War; the "ostovtsy"—workers recruited as laborers by the Germans during World War II; Red Army officers who had been too astute and farsighted in their conclusions, so that Stalin feared they might bring European freedom back from their European crusade, like the Decembrists 120 years before. And yet it was the war prisoners who constituted the bulk of the wave. And among the war prisoners of various ages, most were of my own age—not precisely my age, but *the twins of October*, those born along with the Revolution, who in 1937 had poured forth undismayed to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution, and whose age group, at the beginning of the war, made up the standing army—which had been scattered in a matter of weeks.

That tedious prison spring had, to the tune of the victory marches, become the spring of reckoning for my whole generation.

Over our cradles the rallying cry had resounded: "All power to the Soviets!" It was we who had reached out our suntanned childish hands to clutch the Pioneers' bugle, and who in response to the Pioneer challenge, "Be prepared," had saluted and answered: "We are always prepared!" It was we who had smuggled weapons into Buchenwald and joined the Communist Party there. And it was we who were now in disgrace, only because we had survived.[1]

Back when the Red Army had cut through East Prussia, I had seen downcast columns of returning war prisoners—the only people around who were grieving instead of celebrating. Even then their gloom had shocked me, though I didn't yet grasp the reason for it. I jumped down and went over to those voluntarily formed-up columns. (Why were they marching in columns? Why had they lined themselves up in ranks? After all, no one had compelled them to, and the war prisoners of all other nations went home as scattered individuals. But ours wanted to return as submissively as possible.) I was wearing a captain's shoulder

1. Those prisoners who had been in Buchenwald and survived were, in fact, imprisoned for that very reason in our own camps: How could you have survived an annihilation camp? Something doesn't smell right!

boards, and they, plus the fact that I was moving forward, helped prevent my finding out why our POW's were so sad. But then fate turned me around and sent me in the wake of those prisoners along the same path they had taken. I had already marched with them from army counterintelligence headquarters to the headquarters at the front, and when we got there I had heard their first stories, which I didn't yet understand; and then Yuri Y. told me the whole thing. And here beneath the domes of the brick-red Butyrki castle, I felt that the story of these several million Russian prisoners had got me in its grip once and for all, like a pin through a specimen beetle. My own story of landing in prison seemed insignificant. I stopped regretting my torn-off shoulder boards. It was mere chance that had kept me from ending up exactly where these contemporaries of mine had ended. I came to understand that it was my duty to take upon my shoulders a share of their common burden—and to bear it to the last man, until it crushed us. I now felt as if I, too, had fallen prisoner at the Solovyev crossing, in the Kharkov encirclement, in the quarries of Kerch, and, hands behind my back, had carried my Soviet pride behind the barbed wire of the concentration camps; that I, too, had stood for hours in the freezing cold for a ladle of cold Kawa (an ersatz coffee) and had been left on the ground for dead, without even reaching the kettle; that in Oflag 68 (Suwalki) I had used my hands and the lid of a mess tin to dig a bell-shaped (upturned, that is) foxhole, so as not to have to spend the winter on the open field; and that a maddened prisoner had crawled up to me as I lay dying to gnaw on the still warm flesh beneath my arm; and with every new day of exacerbated, famished consciousness, lying in a barracks riddled with typhus, or at the barbed wire of the neighboring camp for English POW's, the clear thought had penetrated my dying brain: Soviet Russia has renounced her dying children. She had needed them, "proud sons of Russia," as long as they let the tanks roll over them and it was still possible to rouse them to attack. But to feed them once they were war prisoners? Extra mouths. And extra witnesses to humiliating defeats.

Sometimes we try to lie but our tongue will not allow us to. These people were labeled traitors, but a remarkable slip of the tongue occurred—on the part of the judges, prosecutors, and

interrogators. And the convicted prisoners, the entire nation, and the newspapers repeated and reinforced this mistake, involuntarily letting the truth out of the bag. They intended to declare them "traitors *to* the Motherland." But they were universally referred to, in speech and in writing, even in the court documents, as "traitors *of* the Motherland."

You said it! They were not traitors *to her*. They were *her* traitors. It was not they, the unfortunates, who had betrayed the Motherland, but their calculating Motherland who had betrayed them, and not just once but *thrice*.

The first time she betrayed them was on the battlefield, through ineptitude—when the government, so beloved by the Motherland, did everything it could to lose the war: destroyed the lines of fortifications; set up the whole air force for annihilation; dismantled the tanks and artillery; removed the effective generals; and forbade the armies to resist.[2] And the war prisoners were the men whose bodies took the blow and stopped the Wehrmacht.

The second time they were heartlessly betrayed by the Motherland was when she abandoned them to die in captivity.

And the third time they were unscrupulously betrayed was when, with motherly love, she coaxed them to return home, with such phrases as "The Motherland has forgiven you! The Motherland calls you!" and snared them the moment they reached the frontiers.[3]

It would appear that during the one thousand one hundred years of Russia's existence as a state there have been, ah, how many foul and terrible deeds! But among them was there ever so multimillioned foul a deed as this: to betray one's own soldiers and proclaim them traitors?

How easily we left them out of our own accounting! He was a traitor? For shame! Write him off! And our Father *wrote them off*, even before we did: he threw the flower of Moscow's intelligentsia into the Vyazma meat grinder with Berdan single-

2. Now, after twenty-seven years, the first honest work on this subject has appeared—P. G. Grigorenko, "A Letter to the Magazine *Problems of the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*," samizdat, 1968—and such works are going to multiply from here on out. Not all the witnesses died. And soon no one will call Stalin's government anything but a government of insanity and treason.

3. One of the biggest war criminals, Colonel General Golikov, former chief of the Red Army's intelligence administration, was put in charge of coaxing the repatriates home and swallowing them up.

loading rifles, vintage 1866, and only one for every five men at that. What Lev Tolstoi is going to describe *that* Borodino for us? And with one stupid slither of his greasy, stubby finger, the Great Strategist sent *120,000* of our young men, almost as many as all the Russian forces at Borodino, across the Strait of Kerch in December, 1941—senselessly, and exclusively for the sake of a sensational New Year's communiqué—and he turned them all over to the Germans without a fight.

And yet, for some reason, it was not he who was the traitor, but they.

(How easily we let ourselves be taken in by partisan labels; how easily we agreed to regard these devoted men as—traitors! In one of the Butyrki cells that spring, there was an old man, Lebedev, a metallurgist, a professor in rank, and in appearance a stalwart artisan of the last century or maybe even the century before, from, say, the famous Demidov iron foundries. He was broad of shoulder, broad of head, wore a Pugachev-like beard, and the wide span of his hand could lift a 150-pound bucket. In the cell he wore a faded gray laborer's smock over his underwear; he was slovenly and might have been an auxiliary prison worker—until he sat down to read, and then his habitual powerful intelligence lit up his face. The men often gathered around him. He discussed metallurgy very little, but explained to us in his kettledrum bass voice that Stalin was exactly the same kind of dog as Ivan the Terrible: "Shoot!" "Strangle!" "Don't hesitate!" He explained to us also that Maxim Gorky had been a slobbering prattler, an apologist for executioners. I was very much taken with this Lebedev. It was as though the whole Russian people were embodied, there before my eyes, in that one thick-set torso with that intelligent head and the arms and legs of a plowman. He had already thought through so much! I learned from him to understand the world! And suddenly, with a chopping gesture of his huge hand, he thundered out that those charged under Article 58-1b were traitors of the Motherland and must not be forgiven. And those very same *1b's* were piled up on the board bunks all around. And how hurtful to them this was! The old man was pontificating with such conviction in the name of Russia's peasantry and labor that they were abashed and found it hard to defend themselves against the attack from this new direction. I was the one to whom it fell, along with two boys charged under

58-10, to defend them and to argue with the old man. But what depths of enforced ignorance were achieved by the monstrous lies of the state. Even the most broad-minded of us can embrace only that part of the truth into which our own snout has blundered.)[4]

How many wars Russia has been involved in! (It would have been better if there had been fewer.) And were there many traitors in all those wars? Had anyone observed that treason had become deeply rooted in the hearts of Russian soldiers? Then, under the most just social system in the world, came the most just war of all—and out of nowhere millions of traitors appeared, from among the simplest, lowliest elements of the population. How is this to be understood and explained?

Capitalist England fought at our side against Hitler; Marx had eloquently described the poverty and suffering of the working class in that same England. Why was it that in this war only one traitor could be found among *them*, the businessman "Lord Haw Haw"—but in our country millions?

It is frightening to open one's trap about this, but might the heart of the matter not be in the political system?

One of our most ancient proverbs justifies the war prisoner: "The captive will cry out, but the dead man never." During the reign of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, *nobility* was granted for *durance in captivity!* And in *all* subsequent wars it was considered society's duty to exchange prisoners, to comfort one's own and to give them sustenance and aid. Every escape from captivity was glorified as the height of heroism. Throughout World War I, money was collected in Russia to aid our prisoners of war, and our nurses were permitted to go to Germany to help our prisoners, and our newspapers reminded their readers daily that our prisoners of war, our compatriots, were languishing in evil captivity.

4. Vitkovsky writes about this, on the basis of the thirties, in more general terms. It was astonishing that the pseudo wreckers, who knew perfectly well that they weren't wreckers, believed that military men and priests were being *shaken up* justifiably. The military men, who knew they hadn't worked for foreign intelligence services and had not sabotaged the Red Army, believed readily enough that the engineers were wreckers and that the priests deserved to be destroyed. Imprisoned, the Soviet person reasoned in the following way: I personally am innocent, but any methods are justified in dealing with those others, the enemies. The lessons of interrogation and the cell failed to enlighten such people. Even after they themselves had been convicted, they retained the blind beliefs of their days in *freedom*: belief in universal conspiracies, poisonings, wrecking, espionage.

All the Western peoples behaved the same in our war: parcels, letters, all kinds of assistance flowed freely through the neutral countries. The Western POW's did not have to lower themselves to accept ladlefuls from German soup kettles. They talked back to the German guards. Western governments gave their captured soldiers their seniority rights, their regular promotions, even their pay.

The only soldier in the world *who cannot surrender* is the soldier of the world's one and only Red Army. That's what it says in our military statutes. (The Germans would shout at us from their trenches: "Ivan plen nicht!"—"Ivan no prisoner!") Who can picture all that means? There is war; there is death—but there is no surrender! What a discovery! What it means is: Go and die; we will go on living. And if you lose your legs, yet manage to return from captivity on crutches, we will convict you. (The Leningrader Ivanov, commander of a machine-gun platoon in the Finnish War, was subsequently thus imprisoned in Ustvymlag, for example.)

Our soldiers alone, renounced by their Motherland and degraded to nothing in the eyes of enemies and allies, had to push their way to the swine swill being doled out in the backyards of the Third Reich. Our soldiers alone had the doors shut tight to keep them from returning to their homes, although their young souls tried hard not to believe this. There was something called Article 58-1b—and, in wartime, it provided only for execution by shooting! For not wanting to die from a German bullet, the prisoner had to die from a Soviet bullet for having been a prisoner of war! Some get theirs from the enemy; we get it from our own!

Incidentally, it is very naïve to say *What for?* At no time have governments been moralists. They never imprisoned people and executed them *for* having done something. They imprisoned and executed them *to keep them from* doing something. They imprisoned all those POW's, of course, not *for* treason to the Motherland, because it was absolutely clear even to a fool that only the Vlasov men could be accused of treason. They imprisoned all of them *to keep them from* telling their fellow villagers about Europe. What the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve for.

What, then, were the courses of action open to Russian war prisoners? There was only one *legally acceptable* course: to lie

down and let oneself be trampled to death. Every blade of grass pushes its fragile length upward in order to live. As for you—lie down and be trampled on. Even though you've been slow about it, even though you couldn't do it on the battlefield, at least die now; then you will not be prosecuted.

> The soldiers sleep. They spoke their word
> And they are right for eternity.

And every other path which, in desperation, your mind may invent is going to lead you into conflict with the Law.

Escape and return to the Motherland—past the guards ringing the camp, across half Germany, then through Poland or the Balkans—led straight to SMERSH and prison. They were asked: How did you manage to escape when others couldn't? This stinks! Come on, you rat, what *assignment* did they give you? (Mikhail Burnatsev, Pavel Bondarenko, and many, many others.)[5]

Escaping to the Western partisans, to the Resistance forces,

5. It has become the accepted thing for our literary critics to say that Sholokhov, in his immortal story *"Sudba Cheloveka"*—"The Fate of a Man"—spoke the "bitter truth" about "this side of our life" and that he "revealed" the problem. But we must retort that in this story, which is in general very inferior, and in which the passages about the war are pale and unconvincing—since the author evidently knew nothing about the last war—and the descriptions of Germans are unconvincing cartoon clichés (only the hero's wife is successfully portrayed—because she is a pure Christian straight out of Dostoyevsky), in this story about a war prisoner, *the real problem of the war prisoners was hidden or distorted:*

(1) The author picked the least incriminating form of being taken prisoner conceivable—the soldier was captured while unconscious, so as to make him noncontroversial and to bypass the whole poignancy of the problem. (What if he had been conscious when he was taken prisoner, as was most often the case? What would have happened to him then?)

(2) The fact that the Motherland had deserted us, had renounced us, had cursed us, was not presented as the war prisoner's chief problem. Sholokhov says not a word about it. But it was because of *that particular factor* that there was no way out. On the contrary, he identifies the presence of traitors among us as constituting the problem. (But if this really was the main thing, one might then expect him to have investigated further and explained where they came from a full quarter-century after a Revolution that was supported by the entire people!)

(3) Sholokhov dreamed up a fantastic, spy-story escape from captivity, stretching innumerable points to avoid the obligatory, inevitable procedural step of the returned war prisoner's reception in SMERSH—the Identification and Screening Camp. Not only was Sokolov, the hero, not put behind barbed wire, as provided in the regulations, but—and this is a real joke—he was given a month's holiday by his colonel! (In other words: the freedom to carry out the *assignment* given him by the Fascist intelligence service. So his colonel would end up *in the same place* as he!)

only postponed your full reckoning with the military tribunal; also, it made you still more dangerous. You could have acquired a very harmful spirit through living freely among Europeans. And if you had not been afraid to escape and continue to fight, it meant you were a determined person and thus doubly dangerous in the Motherland.

Did you survive POW camp at the expense of your compatriots and comrades? Did you become a member of the camp Polizei, or a commandant, a helper of the Germans and of death? Stalinist law did not punish you any more severely than if you had operated with the Resistance forces. It was the same article of the Code and the same term—and one could guess why too. *Such* a person was less dangerous. But the inert law that is inexplicably implanted in us forbade this path to all except the dregs.

In addition to those four possibilities—either impossible or unacceptable—there was a fifth: to wait for German recruiters, to see what they would summon you to.

Sometimes, fortunately, representatives came from German rural districts to select hired men for their farmers. Sometimes they came from corporations and picked out engineers and mechanics. According to the supreme Stalinist imperative you should have rejected that too. You should have concealed the fact that you were an engineer. You should have concealed the fact that you were a skilled worker. As an industrial designer or electrician, you could have preserved your patriotic purity only if you had stayed in the POW camp to dig in the earth, to rot, to pick through the garbage heap. In that case, for *pure* treason to the Motherland, you could count on getting, your head raised high in pride, ten years in prison and five more "muzzled." Whereas for treason to the Motherland aggravated by working for the enemy, especially in one's own profession, you got, with bowed head, the same ten years in prison and five more muzzled.

And that was the jeweler's precision of a behemoth—Stalin's trademark.

Now and then recruiters turned up who were of quite a different stripe—Russians, usually recent Communist political commissars. White Guards didn't accept that type of employment. These recruiters scheduled a meeting in the camp, condemned the

Soviet regime, and appealed to prisoners to enlist in spy schools or in Vlasov units.

People who have never starved as our war prisoners did, who have never gnawed on bats that happened to fly into the barracks, who have never had to boil the soles of old shoes, will never understand the irresistible material force exerted by any kind of appeal, any kind of argument whatever, if behind it, on the other side of the camp gates, smoke rises from a field kitchen, and if everyone who signs up is fed a bellyful of kasha right then and there—if only once! Just once more before I die!

And hovering over the steaming kasha and the inducements of the recruiter was the apparition of freedom and a real life—wherever it might call! To the Vlasov battalions. To the Cossack regiments of Krasnov. To the labor battalions—pouring cement in the future Atlantic Wall. To the fjords of Norway. To the sands of Libya. To the "Hiwi" units ("Hilfswillige"—volunteers in the German Wehrmacht—there being twelve "Hiwi" men in each German company). And then, finally, to the village Polizei, who pursued and caught partisans—many of whom the Motherland would also renounce. Wherever it might call, any place at all, at least anything so as not to stay there and die like abandoned cattle.

We *ourselves* released from every obligation, not merely to his Motherland but to all humanity, the human being whom we drove to gnawing on bats.

And those of our boys who agreed to become half-baked spies still had not drawn any drastic conclusions from their abandoned state; they were still, in fact, acting very patriotically. They saw this course as the least difficult means of getting out of POW camp. Almost to a man, they decided that as soon as the Germans sent them across to the Soviet side, they would turn themselves in to the authorities, turn in their equipment and instructions, and join their own benign command in laughing at the stupid Germans. They would then put on their Red Army uniforms and return to fight bravely in their units. And tell me, *who, speaking in human terms, could have expected anything else? How could it have been any other way?* These were straightforward, sincere men. I saw many of them. They had honest round faces and spoke with an attractive Vyatka or Vladimir accent. They boldly joined

up as spies, even though they'd had only four or five grades of rural school and were not even competent to cope with map and compass.

It appears that they picked the only way out they could. And one would suppose that the whole thing was an expensive and stupid game on the part of the German Command. But no! Hitler played in rhythm and in tune with his brother dictator! Spy mania was one of the fundamental aspects of Stalin's insanity. It seemed to Stalin that the country was swarming with spies. All the Chinese who lived in the Soviet Far East were convicted as spies—Article 58-6—and were taken to the northern camps, where they perished. The same fate had awaited Chinese participants in the Soviet civil war—if they hadn't cleared out in time. Several hundred thousand Koreans were exiled to Kazakhstan, all similarly accused of spying. All Soviet citizens who at one time or another had lived abroad, who at one time or another had hung around Intourist hotels, who at one time or another happened to be photographed next to a foreigner, or who had themselves photographed a city building (the Golden Gate in Vladimir) were accused of the same crime. Those who stared too long at railroad tracks, at a highway bridge, at a factory chimney were similarly charged. All the numerous foreign Communists stranded in the Soviet Union, all the big and little Comintern officials and employees, one after another, without any individual distinctions, were charged first of all with espionage.[6] And the Latvian Riflemen—whose bayonets were the most reliable in the first years of the Revolution—were also accused of espionage when they were arrested to a man in 1937. Stalin seems somehow to have twisted around and maximized the famous declaration of that coquette Catherine the Great: he would rather that 999 innocent men should rot than miss one genuine spy. Given all this, how could one believe and trust Russian soldiers who had really been in the hands of the German intelligence service? And how it eased the burden for the MGB executioners when thousands of soldiers pouring in from Europe did not even try to conceal that they had voluntarily enlisted as spies. What an astonishing con-

6. Iosip Tito just barely escaped this fate. And Popov and Tanev, fellow defendants of Dimitrov in the Leipzig trial, both got prison terms. (For Dimitrov himself Stalin prepared another fate.)

firmation of the predictions of the Wisest of the Wise! Come on, keep coming, you silly fools! The article and the retribution have long since been waiting for you!

But it is appropriate to ask one thing more. There still were prisoners of war who did not accept recruiting offers, who never worked for the Germans at their profession or trade, and who were not camp police, *who spent the whole war in POW camps, without sticking their noses outside,* and who, in spite of everything, did not die, however unlikely this was. For example, they made cigarette lighters out of scrap metal, like the electrical engineers Nikolai Andreyevich Semyonov and Fyodor Fyodorovich Karpov, and in that way managed to get enough to eat. And did the Motherland forgive them for surrendering?

No, it did not forgive them! I met both Semyonov and Karpov in the Butyrki after they had already received their lawful sentence. And what was it? The alert reader already knows: *ten years of imprisonment and five muzzled.* As brilliant engineers, they had *rejected* German offers to work at their profession. In 1941 Junior Lieutenant Semyonov had gone to the front as a *volunteer.* In 1942 he still didn't have a revolver; instead, he had *an empty holster*—and the interrogator could not understand why he hadn't shot himself with his holster! He had escaped from captivity *three times.* And in 1945, after he had been liberated from a concentration camp, seated atop a tank as a member of a penalty unit of tank-borne infantry, *he took part in the capture of Berlin* and received the Order of the *Red Star.* Yet, after all that, he was finally imprisoned and *sentenced.* All of this mirrored our Nemesis.

Very few of the war prisoners returned across the Soviet border as free men, and if one happened to get through by accident because of the prevailing chaos, he was seized later on, even as late as 1946 or 1947. Some were arrested at assembly points in Germany. Others weren't arrested openly right away but were transported from the border in freight cars, under convoy, to one of the numerous Identification and Screening Camps (PFL's) scattered throughout the country. These camps differed in no way from the common run of Corrective Labor Camps (ITL's) except that their prisoners had not yet been sentenced but would be sentenced there. All these PFL's were also attached to some

kind of factory, or mine, or construction project, and the former POW's, looking out on the Motherland newly restored to them through the same barbed wire through which they had seen Germany, could begin work from their first day on a ten-hour work day. Those under suspicion were questioned during their rest periods, in the evenings, and at night, and there were large numbers of Security officers and interrogators in the PFL's for this purpose. As always, the interrogation began with the hypothesis that you were obviously guilty. And you, without going outside the barbed wire, had to prove that you were *not* guilty. Your only available means to this end was to rely on witnesses who were exactly the same kind of POW's as you. Obviously they might not have turned up in your own PFL; they might, in fact, be at the other end of the country; in that case, the Security officers of, say, Kemerovo would send off inquiries to the Security officers of Solikamsk, who would question the witnesses and send back their answers along with new inquiries, and you yourself would be questioned as a witness in some other case. True, it might take a year or two before your fate was resolved, but after all, the Motherland was losing nothing in the process. You were out mining coal every day. And if one of your witnesses gave the wrong sort of testimony about you, or if none of your witnesses was alive, you had only yourself to blame, and you were sure to be entered in the documents as a traitor *of* the Motherland. And the visiting military court would rubber-stamp your *tenner*. And if, despite all their twisting things about, it appeared that you really hadn't worked for the Germans, and if—and this was the main point—you had not had the chance to see the Americans and English with your own eyes (to have been liberated from captivity by *them* instead of by us was a gravely aggravating circumstance), then the Security officers would decide the degree of isolation in which you were to be held. Certain people were ordered to change their place of residence—which always breaks a person's ties with his environment and makes him more vulnerable. Others were valiantly offered the chance to go to work in the VOKhR, the Militarized Guard Service. In that situation, while nominally remaining free, a man lost all his personal freedom and was sent off to some isolated area. There was a third category: after a handshake, some were

humanely permitted to return home, although, even without aggravating circumstances, they deserved to be shot for having surrendered. But people in this category celebrated prematurely! Even before the former prisoner arrived home, his *case* had reached his home district through the secret channels of State Security. These people remained eternally *outsiders*. And with the first mass arrests, like those of 1948–1949, they were immediately arrested for hostile propaganda or some other reason. I was imprisoned with people in that category too.

"Oh, if I had only known!" That was the refrain in the prison cells that spring. If I had only known that this was how I would be greeted! That they would deceive me so! That this would be my fate! Would I have really returned to my Motherland? Not for anything! I would have made my way to Switzerland, to France! I would have gone across the sea, across the ocean! Across three oceans![7]

But the more thoughtful prisoners corrected them. They had made their mistake earlier! They were stupid to have dashed off to the front lines in 1941. It takes a fool to rush off to war! Right from the start, they should have gotten themselves set up in the rear. Somewhere quiet. Those who did are heroes now. And it would have been an even surer thing just to desert. Almost certainly, one's skin would be whole. They didn't get ten years either—but eight, or seven. And they weren't excluded from any of the cushy jobs in camp. After all, a deserter was not regarded as an enemy or a traitor or a political prisoner. He was considered not a hostile factor but a friendly one, *a nonpolitical offender,* so to speak. That point of view aroused passionate

7. In actual fact, even when POW's actually *knew* what would happen to them, they behaved in exactly the same way. Vasily Aleksandrov was taken prisoner in Finland. He was sought out there by some elderly Petersburg merchant who asked him his name and patronymic and then said: "In 1917 I owed your grandfather a large debt, and I didn't have the chance to pay it. Here you are—take it!" An old debt is a windfall! After the war Aleksandrov was accepted by the circle of Russian émigrés, and he got engaged to a girl there whom he came to love—and not just casually. To educate him, his future father-in-law gave him a bound set of *Pravda*—just as it was issued from 1918 to 1941, without any deletions or corrections. At the same time, he recounted to him more or less completely the history of the *waves* of arrests, as we have set it forth in Chapter 2, above. And nevertheless . . . Aleksandrov abandoned his fiancée, and his wealth, and returned to the U.S.S.R., where he was given, as one can easily guess, *ten years and disenfranchisement for five more.* In 1953 he was happy to have managed to snag himself a job as foreman in a Special Camp.

argument and objections. The deserters had to spend all those years rotting in prison, and they would not be forgiven. But there would soon be an amnesty for everyone else; they would all be released. (At that time the principal advantage of being a deserter was still unknown.)

Those who had gotten in via 58-10, snatched from their apartments or from the Red Army, often envied the rest. What the hell! For *the very same money,* in other words for the same ten-year sentence, they could have seen so many interesting things, like those other fellows, who had been just about everywhere! And here we are, about to croak in camp, without ever having seen anything beyond our own stinking stairs. Incidentally, those who were in on Article 58-10 could hardly conceal their triumphant presentiment that they would be the first to be amnestied.

The only ones who did not sigh: "Oh, if I had only known"—because they knew very well what they were doing—and the only ones who did not expect any mercy and did not expect an amnesty—were the Vlasov men.

■

I had known about them and been perplexed about them long before our unexpected meeting on the board bunks of prison.

First there had been the leaflets, repeatedly soaked through, dried out, and lost in the high grass—uncut for the third year—of the front-line strip near Orel. In December, 1942, they had announced the creation in Smolensk of a "Russian Committee"—which apparently claimed to be some sort of Russian government and yet at the same time seemed not to be one. Evidently the Germans themselves had not yet made up their minds. For that reason, the communiqué seemed to be a hoax. There was a photograph of General Vlasov in the leaflets, and his biography was outlined. In the fuzzy photograph, his face looked well fed and successful, like all our generals of the new stripe. They told me later that this wasn't so, that Vlasov's face was more like that of a Western general—high, thin, with horn-rimmed glasses. His biography testified to a penchant for success. He had begun in a peasant family, and 1937 had not broken his skyrocketing career; nor was it ruined by his service as a military adviser to

Chiang Kai-shek. The first and only disaster of his earlier life had occurred when his Second Shock Army, after being encircled, was ineptly abandoned to die of starvation. But how much of that whole biography could be believed?[8]

8. As far as one can establish at this late date, Andrei Andreyevich Vlasov, prevented by the Revolution from completing his studies at the Nizhni Novgorod Orthodox Seminary, was drafted into the Red Army in 1919 and fought as an enlisted man. On the southern front, against Denikin and Wrangel, he rose to be commander of a platoon, then of a company. In the twenties he completed the Vystrel courses. He became a member of the Communist Party in 1930. In 1936, having attained the rank of regimental commander, he was sent to China as a military adviser. Evidently he had no ties to the top military and Party circles, and he therefore turned up naturally in that Stalinist "second echelon" of officers promoted to replace the purged commanders of armies, divisions, and brigades. From 1938 on he commanded a division. And in 1940, when "new" (in other words, old) officer ranks were created, he became a major general. From additional information one can conclude that in that corps of newly made generals, many of whom were totally stupid and inexperienced, Vlasov was one of the most talented. His 99th Infantry Division, which he had instructed and trained from the summer of 1940 on, was not caught off balance by the German attack. On the contrary, while the rest of the army reeled backward, his division advanced, retook Przemysl, and held it for six days. Quickly skipping the rank of corps commander, in 1941 Lieutenant General Vlasov was in command of the Thirty-seventh Army near Kiev. He made his way out of the enormous Kiev encirclement and in December, 1941, near Moscow he commanded the Twentieth Army, whose successful Soviet counteroffensive for defense of the capital (the taking of Solnechnogorsk) was noted in the Sovinformburo communiqué for December 12. And the list of generals mentioned there was as follows: Zhukov, Lelyushenko, Kuznetsov, Vlasov, Rokossovsky, Govorov. Thanks to the speed with which officers were promoted in those months, he became Deputy Commander of the Volkhov Front (under Meretskov), and took over command of the Second Shock Army. On January 7, 1942, at the head of that army, he began a drive to break the Leningrad blockade—an attack across the Volkhov River to the northwest. This had been planned as a combined operation, a concerted push from several directions and from Leningrad itself. At scheduled intervals the Fifty-fourth, the Fourth, and the Fifty-second armies were to take part in it also. But those three armies either did not advance because they were unready or else came to a quick halt. At that time we still didn't have the capacity to plan such complex combined operations, and, more importantly, provide supplies for them. Vlasov's Second Shock Army, however, was successful in its assault, and by February, 1942, it was 46 miles deep inside the German lines! And from then on, the reckless Stalinist Supreme Command could find neither men nor ammunition to reinforce even those troops. (That's the kind of reserves they had begun the offensive with!) Leningrad, too, was left to die behind the blockade, having received no specific information from Novgorod. During March the winter roads still held up. From April on, however, the entire swampy area through which the Second Army had advanced melted into mud, and there were no supply roads, and there was no help from the air. The army was *without food* and, at the same time, Vlasov *was refused permission to retreat.* For two months they endured starvation and extermination. In the Butyrki, soldiers from that army told me how they had cut off the hoofs of dead and rotting horses and boiled the scrapings and eaten them. Then, on May 14, a German attack was launched from all sides against the encircled

From his photograph, it was impossible to believe that he was an outstanding man or that for long years he had suffered profoundly for Russia. As for the leaflets reporting the creation of the ROA, the "Russian Liberation Army," not only were they written in bad Russian, but they were imbued with an alien spirit that was clearly German and, moreover, seemed little concerned with their presumed subject; besides, and on the other hand, they contained crude boasting about the plentiful chow available and the cheery mood of the soldiers. Somehow one couldn't believe in that army, and, if it really did exist, what kind of cheery mood could it be in? Only a German could lie like that.[9]

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army. The only planes in the air, of course, were German. And only then, in mockery, were they given permission to pull back behind the Volkhov. They made several hopeless attempts to break through—until the beginning of July.

And so it was that Vlasov's Second Shock Army perished, literally recapitulating the fate of Samsonov's Russian Second Army in World War I, having been just as insanely thrown into encirclement.

Now this, of course, was treason to the Motherland! This, of course, was vicious, self-obsessed betrayal! But it was Stalin's. Treason does not necessarily involve selling out for money. It can include ignorance and carelessness in the preparations for war, confusion and cowardice at its very start, the meaningless sacrifice of armies and corps solely for the sake of saving one's own marshal's uniform. Indeed, what more bitter treason is there on the part of a Supreme Commander in Chief?

Unlike Samsonov, Vlasov did not commit suicide. After his army had been wiped out, he wandered among the woods and swamps and, on July 6, personally surrendered in the area of Siverskaya. He was taken to the German headquarters near Lötzen in East Prussia, where they were holding several captured generals and a brigade political commissar, G. N. Zhilenkov, formerly a successful Party official and secretary of one of the Moscow District Party Committees. These captives had already confessed their disagreement with the policy of the Stalin government. But they had no real leader. Vlasov became it.

9. In reality there was no Russian Liberation Army until almost the very end of the war. Both the name and the insignia devised for it were invented by a German of Russian origin, Captain Strik-Strikfeldt, in the Ost-Propaganda-Abteilung. Although he held only a minor position, he had influence, and he tried to convince the Hitlerite leadership that a German-Russian alliance was essential and that the Russians should be encouraged to collaborate with Germany. A vain undertaking for both sides! Each side wanted only to use and deceive the other. But, in the given situation, the Germans had power—they were on top of the setup. And the Vlasov officers had only their fantasy—at the bottom of the abyss. There was no such army, but anti-Soviet formations made up of Soviet citizens were organized from the very start of the war. The first to support the Germans were the Lithuanians. In the one year we had been there we had aroused their deep, angry hostility! And then the SS-Galicia Division was created from Ukrainian volunteers. And Estonian units afterward. In the fall of 1941, guard companies appeared in Byelorussia. And a Tatar battalion in the Crimea. We ourselves had sowed the seeds of all this! Take,

We soon discovered that there really were Russians fighting against us and that they fought harder than any SS men. In July, 1943, for example, near Orel, a platoon of Russians in German uniform defended Sobakinskiye Vyselki. They fought with the desperation that might have been expected if they had built the place themselves. One of them was driven into a root cellar. They threw hand grenades in after him and he fell silent. But they had no more than stuck their heads in than he let them have another volley from his automatic pistol. Only when they lobbed in an antitank grenade did they find out that, within the root cellar, he had another foxhole in which he had taken shelter from the infantry grenades. Just try to imagine the degree of shock, deafness, and hopelessness in which he had kept on fighting.

They defended, for example, the unshakable Dnieper bridgehead south of Tursk. For two weeks we continued to fight there for a mere few hundred yards. The battles were fierce in December, 1943, and so was the cold. Through many long days both we and they went through the extreme trials of winter, fighting

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for example, our stupid twenty-year policy of closing and destroying the Moslem mosques in the Crimea. And compare that with the policy of the farsighted conqueror Catherine the Great, who contributed state funds for building and expanding the Crimean mosques. And the Hitlerites, when they arrived, were smart enough to present themselves as their defenders. Later, Caucasian detachments and Cossack armies—more than a cavalry corps—put in an appearance on the German side. In the first winter of the war, platoons and companies of Russian volunteers began to be formed. But the German Command was very distrustful of these Russian units, and their master sergeants and lieutenants were Germans. Only their noncoms below master sergeant were Russian. They also used such German commands as "Achtung!," "Halt!" etc. More significant and entirely Russian were the following units: a brigade in Lokot, in Bryansk Province, from November, 1941, when a local teacher of engineering, K. P. Voskoboinikov, proclaimed the "National Labor Party of Russia" and issued a manifesto to the citizens of the nation, hoisting the flag of St. George; a unit in the Osintorf settlement near Orsha, formed at the beginning of 1942 under the leadership of Russian émigrés (it must be said that only a small group of Russian émigrés joined this movement, and even they did not conceal their anti-German feelings and allowed many crossovers [including a whole battalion] to the Soviet side . . . after which they were dropped by the Germans); and a unit formed by Gil, in the summer of 1942, near Lublin. (V. V. Gil, a Communist Party member and even, it seems, a Jew, not only survived as a POW but, with the help of other POW's, became the head of a camp near Suwalki and offered to create a "fighting alliance of Russian nationalists" for the Germans.) However, there was as yet no Russian Liberation Army in all of this and no Vlasov. The companies under German command were put on the Russian front, as an experiment, and the Russian units were sent against the Bryansk, Orsha, and Polish partisans.

in winter camouflage cloaks that covered our overcoats and caps. Near Malye Kozlovichi, I was told, an interesting encounter took place. As the soldiers dashed back and forth among the pines, things got confused, and two soldiers lay down next to one another. No longer very accurately oriented, they kept shooting at someone, somewhere over there. Both had Soviet automatic pistols. They shared their cartridges, praised one another, and together swore at the grease freezing on their automatic pistols. Finally, their pistols stopped firing altogether, and they decided to take a break and light up. They pulled back their white hoods —and at the same instant each saw the other's cap . . . the eagle and the star. They jumped up! Their automatic pistols still refused to fire! Grabbing them by the barrel and swinging them like clubs, they began to go at each other. This, if you will, was not politics and not the Motherland, but just sheer caveman distrust: If I take pity on him, he is going to kill me.

In East Prussia, a trio of captured Vlasov men was being marched along the roadside a few steps away from me. At that moment a T-34 tank thundered down the highway. Suddenly one of the captives twisted around and dived underneath the tank. The tank veered, but the edge of its track crushed him nevertheless. The broken man lay writhing, bloody foam coming from his mouth. And one could certainly understand him! He preferred a soldier's death to being hanged in a dungeon.

They had no choice. There was no other way for them to fight. They had no chance to find a way out, to safeguard their lives, by some more cautious mode of fighting. If "pure" surrender was considered unforgivable treason to the Motherland, then what about those who had taken up enemy arms? Our propaganda, in all its crudity, explained their conduct as: (1) treason (was it biologically based? carried in the bloodstream?); or (2) cowardice—which it certainly was not! A coward tries to find a spot where things are easy, soft, safe. And men could be induced to enter the Wehrmacht's Vlasov detachments only in the last extremity, only at the limit of desperation, only out of inexhaustible hatred of the Soviet regime, only with total contempt for their own safety. For they knew they would never have the faintest glimpse of mercy! When we captured them, we shot them as soon as the first intelligible Russian word came from their mouths. In

Russian captivity, as in German captivity, the worst lot of all was reserved for the Russians.

In general, this war revealed to us that the worst thing in the world was to be a Russian.

I recall with shame an incident I observed during the liquidation—in other words, the plundering—of the Bobruisk encirclement, when I was walking along the highway among wrecked and overturned German automobiles, and a wealth of booty lay scattered everywhere. German cart horses wandered aimlessly in and out of a shallow depression where wagons and automobiles that had gotten stuck were buried in the mud, and bonfires of booty were smoking away. Then I heard a cry for help: "Mr. Captain! Mr. Captain!" A prisoner on foot in German britches was crying out to me in pure Russian. He was naked from the waist up, and his face, chest, shoulders, and back were all bloody, while a sergeant osobist, a Security man, seated on a horse, drove him forward with a whip, pushing him with his horse. He kept lashing that naked back up and down with the whip, without letting him turn around, without letting him ask for help. He drove him along, beating and beating him, raising new crimson welts on his skin.

And this was not one of the Punic Wars, nor a war between the Greeks and the Persians! Any officer, possessing any authority, in any army on earth ought to have stopped that senseless torture. In any army on earth, yes, but in ours? Given our fierce and uncompromising method of dividing mankind? (If you are *not with us,* if you are *not our own, etc.,* then you deserve nothing but contempt and annihilation.) So I *was afraid* to defend the Vlasov man against the osobist. *I said nothing and I did nothing. I passed him by as if I could not hear him* . . . so that I myself would not be infected by that universally recognized plague. (What if the Vlasov man was indeed some kind of supervillain? Or maybe the osobist would think something was wrong with me? And then?) Or, putting it more simply for anyone who knows anything about the situation in the Soviet Army at that time: would that osobist have paid any attention to an army captain?

So the osobist continued to lash the defenseless man brutally and drive him along like a beast.

This picture will remain etched in my mind forever. This, after

all, is almost a symbol of the Archipelago. It ought to be on the jacket of this book.

The Vlasov men had a presentiment of all this; they knew it ahead of time; nevertheless, on the left sleeve of their German uniforms they sewed the shield with the white-blue-red edging, the field of St. Andrew, and the letters "ROA."[10] The inhabitants

10. These letters became even better known, although, as before, there was still no real Russian Liberation Army. The units were all scattered and kept subordinate to German orders, and the Vlasov generals had nothing to do but play cards in Dahlemdorf, near Berlin. By the middle of 1942, Voskoboinikov's brigade, which, after his death, was commanded by Kaminsky, numbered five infantry regiments of 2,500 to 3,000 men each, with attached artillery crews, a tank battalion consisting of two dozen Soviet tanks, and an artillery battalion with three dozen guns. The commanding officers were POW officers, and the rank and file was made up, in considerable part, of local Bryansk volunteers. This brigade was under orders to guard the area against partisans. In the summer of 1942, the brigade of Gil-Blazhevich was transferred for the same purpose from Poland, where it had been notable for its cruelty toward Poles and Jews, to the area near Mogilev. At the beginning of 1943, its command refused to acknowledge Vlasov's authority, demanding that he explain why, in his stated program, there was no reference to the "struggle against world Jewry and Jew-loving commissars." These were the very men—called the Rodionovites, because Gil had changed his name to Rodionov—who in August, 1943, when Hitler's approaching defeat became apparent, changed their black flag with a silver skull to a red flag, and proclaimed Soviet authority and a large "partisan region" in the northeast corner of Byelorussia.

At that time, Soviet newspapers began to write about the "partisan region," but without explaining its origins. Later on, all surviving Rodionovites were imprisoned. And whom did the Germans immediately throw in against the Rodionovites? The Kaminsky brigade! That was in May, 1944, and they also threw in thirteen of their own divisions in an effort to liquidate the "partisan region." That was the extent to which Germans understood all those tricolor cockades, St. George, and the field of St. Andrew. The Russian and German languages were mutually untranslatable, inexpressible, uncorrelatable. Still worse: in October, 1944, the Germans threw in Kaminsky's brigade—with its Moslem units—to suppress the Warsaw uprising. While one group of Russians sat traitorously dozing beyond the Vistula, watching the death of Warsaw through their binoculars, other Russians crushed the uprising! Hadn't the Poles had enough Russian villainy to bear in the nineteenth century without having to endure more of it in the twentieth? For that matter, was that the last of it? Perhaps more is still to come. The career of the Osintorf Battalion was apparently more straightforward. This consisted of about six hundred soldiers and two hundred officers, with an émigré command, I. K. Sakharov and Lamsdorf, Russian uniforms, and a white-blue-red flag; it was thrown in near Pskov. Then, reinforced to regimental strength, it was readied for a parachute drop on the line of Vologda-Archangel, the idea being to make use of the nest of concentration camps in that area. Throughout 1943, Igor Sakharov managed to prevent his unit from being sent against the partisans. But then he was replaced and the battalion was first disarmed and imprisoned in a camp and then sent off to the Western Front. Then, in the fall of 1943, the Germans decided to send the Russian cannon fodder to the Atlantic Wall, and against the French and Italian Resistance, having lost, forgotten, and not even tried to recall its original purpose. Those among the Vlasov men who had managed to retain some kind of political rationality or hope thereupon lost both.

of the occupied areas held them in contempt as German hirelings. So did the Germans, because of their Russian blood. Their pitiful little newspapers were worked over with a German censor's broadsword: Greater Germany and the Führer. And the Vlasov men had one way out of all that—to fight to the death, and, when they were not fighting, to down vodka and more vodka. *Foredoomed*—that was their existence during all their years of war and alien lands, and there was no salvation for them from any direction.

Hitler and those around him, even when they were retreating on every front and were staring their own destruction in the face, could still not overcome their intense distrust of wholly separate Russian units; they could not bring themselves to organize divisions that were entirely Russian, to allow even the shadow of a Russia that was not totally subject to them. Only in the crack of the final debacle, in November, 1944, was a belated theatrical production at last permitted in Prague: the creation of a "Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia," combining all the different national groups, and a manifesto, which, like everything that had preceded it, was neither fish nor fowl, since the concept of a Russia independent of Germany and Nazism was still not tolerated. Vlasov became chairman of the committee. And only in the fall of 1944 did they begin to form Vlasov divisions that were exclusively Russian.[11] Probably the wise German political leaders had concluded that at this point the Russian workers in Germany (the "ostovtsy") would rush to take up arms. But the Red Army was already on the Vistula and the Danube. And ironically, as though to confirm the farsightedness of the very nearsighted Germans, those Vlasov divisions, in their first and last independent action, dealt a blow—to the Germans themselves. In the general disaster, Vlasov gathered up his two and a half divisions near Prague at the end of April, without coordinating his action with the German Supreme Command. It became known at this point that SS General Steiner was preparing to destroy the Czech capital rather than surrender it intact. And Vlasov ordered his divisions to the aid of the Czech

11. They were: the 1st, based on "the Kaminsky brigade," under S. K. Bunyachenko; the 2nd, under Zverev (former military commandant of Kharkov); half the 3rd; segments of the 4th; and Maltsev's air force detachment. Only four divisions were authorized.

rebels. And at that point, all the hurt, bitterness, and anger against the Germans that had accumulated during three cruel and futile years in the breasts of the enslaved Russians was vented in the attack on the Germans. They were shoved out of Prague from an unexpected direction. Did all Czechs realize later *which* Russians had saved their city? Our own history is similarly distorted; we claim that Prague was saved by Soviet armies, although they couldn't have gotten there in time.

Then the Vlasov army began to retreat toward Bavaria and the Americans. They were pinning all their hopes on the possibility of being useful to the Allies; in this way their years of dangling in the German noose would finally become meaningful. But the Americans greeted them with a wall of armor and forced them to surrender to Soviet hands, as stipulated by the Yalta Conference. In Austria that May, Churchill perpetrated the same sort of "act of a loyal ally," but, out of our accustomed modesty, we did not publicize it. He turned over to the Soviet command the Cossack corps of 90,000 men.[12] Along with them, he also

12. This surrender was an act of double-dealing consistent with the spirit of traditional English diplomacy. The heart of the matter was that the Cossacks were determined to fight to the death, or to cross the ocean, all the way to Paraguay or Indochina if they had to . . . anything rather than surrender alive. Therefore, the English proposed, first, that the Cossacks give up their arms on the pretext of replacing them with standardized weapons. Then the officers —without the enlisted men—were summoned to a supposed conference on the future of the army in the city of Judenburg in the English occupation zone. But the English had secretly turned the city over to the Soviet armies the night before. Forty busloads of officers, all the way from commanders of companies on up to General Krasnov himself, crossed a high viaduct and drove straight down into a semicircle of *Black Marias*, next to which stood convoy guards with lists in their hands. The road back was blocked by Soviet tanks. The officers didn't even have anything with which to shoot themselves or to stab themselves to death, since their weapons had been taken away. They jumped from the viaduct onto the paving stones below. Immediately afterward, and just as treacherously, the English turned over the rank-and-file soldiers by the trainload—pretending that they were on their way to receive new weapons from their commanders.

In their own countries Roosevelt and Churchill are honored as embodiments of statesmanlike wisdom. To us, in our Russian prison conversations, their consistent shortsightedness and stupidity stood out as astonishingly obvious. How could they, in their decline from 1941 to 1945, fail to secure any guarantees whatever of the independence of Eastern Europe? How could they give away broad regions of Saxony and Thuringia in exchange for the preposterous toy of a four-zone Berlin, their own future Achilles' heel? And what was the military or political sense in their surrendering to destruction at Stalin's hands hundreds of thousands of armed Soviet citizens determined not to surrender? They say it was the price they paid for Stalin's agreeing to enter the war against Japan. With the atom bomb already in their hands, they paid Stalin for not

handed over many wagonloads of old people, women, and children who did not want to return to their native Cossack rivers. This great hero, monuments to whom will in time cover all England, ordered that they, too, be surrendered to their deaths.

In addition to the hurriedly created Vlasov divisions, quite a few Russian subunits went right on turning sour in the depths of the German Army, wearing standard German uniforms. They finished out the war on various sectors and in different ways.

I myself fell under Vlasov fire a few days before my arrest. There were Russians in the East Prussian "sack" which we had surrounded, and one night at the end of January their unit tried to break through our position to the west, without artillery preparation, in silence. There was no firmly delineated front in any case, and they penetrated us in depth, catching my sound-locator battery, which was out in front, in a pincers. I just barely managed to pull it back by the last remaining road. But then I went back for a piece of damaged equipment, and, before dawn, I watched as they suddenly rose from the snow where they'd dug in, wearing their winter camouflage cloaks, hurled themselves with a cheer on the battery of a 152-millimeter gun battalion at Adlig Schwenkitten, and knocked out twelve heavy cannon with hand grenades before they could fire a shot. Pursued by their tracer bullets, our last little group ran almost two miles in fresh snow to the bridge across the Passarge River. And there they were stopped.

Soon after that I was arrested. And now, on the eve of the Victory Parade, here we all were sitting together on the board bunks of the Butyrki. I took puffs from their cigarettes and they took puffs from mine. And paired with one or another of them, I used to carry out the six-bucket tin latrine barrel.

Many of the Vlasov men, like the "spies for hire," were

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refusing to occupy Manchuria, for strengthening Mao Tse-tung in China, and for giving Kim Il Sung control of half Korea! What bankruptcy of political thought! And when, subsequently, the Russians pushed out Mikolajczyk, when Benes and Masaryk came to their ends, when Berlin was blockaded, and Budapest flamed and fell silent, and Korea went up in smoke, and Britain's Conservatives fled from Suez, could one really believe that those among them with the most accurate memories did not at least recall that episode of the Cossacks?

young, born, say, between 1915 and 1922, that same "young and unknown tribe" which hustling-bustling Lunacharsky had hurried to greet in the name of Pushkin. Most of them got into Vlasov military units through that same blind chance which led their comrades in a neighboring camp to get into the spy thing —it all depended on which recruiter had gone where.

The recruiters had explained to them jeeringly—or rather, it would have been jeering if it hadn't been the truth: "Stalin has renounced you! Stalin doesn't give a damn about you!"

Soviet law had outlawed them even before they outlawed themselves.

So they signed up—some of them simply to get out of a death camp, others with the hope of going over to the partisans. (And some of them did! And fought side by side with the partisans! But according to Stalin's rules that didn't soften their sentences in the least.) However, in the case of some, the shame of 1941, that stunning defeat after long, long years of braggadocio, ate at their hearts. Some believed that the primary guilt for those inhuman POW camps belonged to Stalin. They, too, wanted the chance to speak out about themselves and their awful experience: to affirm that they, too, were particles of Russia, and wanted to influence Russia's future, and not to be the puppets of other people's mistakes.

But fate played them an even bitterer trick, and they became more abject pawns than before. The Germans, in their shallow stupidity and self-importance, allowed them only to die for the German Reich, but denied them the right to plan an independent destiny for Russia.

And the Allies were two thousand versts away—and anyway, what kind of allies would they indeed turn out to be?

The term "Vlasovite" in our country has the same force as the word "sewage." We feel we are dirtying our mouths merely by pronouncing it, and therefore no one dares utter a sentence with "Vlasovite" as its subject.

But that is no way to write history. Now, a quarter of a century later, when most of them have perished in camps and those who have survived are living out their lives in the Far North, I would like to issue a reminder, through these pages, that this was a phenomenon totally unheard of in all world history: that

several hundred thousand young men,[18] aged twenty to thirty, took up arms against their Fatherland as allies of its most evil enemy. Perhaps there is something to ponder here: Who was more to blame, those youths or the gray Fatherland? One cannot explain this treason biologically. It has to have had a social cause.

Because, as the old proverb says: *Well-fed horses don't rampage.*

Then picture to yourself a field in which starved, neglected, crazed horses are rampaging back and forth.

■

That same spring many Russian émigrés were also in those cells.

It was very like a dream: the resurrection of buried history. The weighty tomes on the Civil War had long since been completed and their covers shut tight. The causes for which people fought in it had been decided. The chronology of its events had been set down in textbooks. The leaders of the White movement were, it appeared, no longer our contemporaries on earth but mere ghosts of a past that had melted away. The Russian émigrés had been more cruelly dispersed than the tribes of Israel. And, in our Soviet imagination, if they were still dragging out their lives somewhere, it was as pianists in stinking little restaurants, as lackeys, laundresses, beggars, morphine and cocaine addicts, and virtual corpses. Right up to 1941, when the war came, it would have been impossible to find out from any hints in our newspapers, our lofty literature, our criticism of the arts (nor did our own well-fed masters of art and literature help us find out) that Russia Abroad was a great spiritual world, that in it Russian philosophy was living and developing; that out there were philosophers like Bulgakov, Berdyayev, and Lossky; that Russian art had enchanted the world; that Rachmaninoff, Chaliapin, Benois, Diaghilev, Pavlova, and the Don Cossack Chorus of Jaroff were out there; that profound studies of Dostoyevsky were being undertaken (at a time when he was anathema in the

13. This, in fact, is the number of Soviet citizens who were in the Wehrmacht—in pre-Vlasov and Vlasov formations, and in the Cossack, Moslem, Baltic, and Ukrainian units and detachments.

Soviet Union); that the incredible writer Nabokov-Sirin also existed out there; that Bunin himself was still alive and had been writing for all these twenty years; that journals of the arts were being published; that theatrical works were being produced; that Russians from the same areas of Russia came together in groups where their mother tongue could be heard; and that émigré men had not given up marrying émigré women, who in turn presented them with children, which meant young people our own age.

The picture of emigration presented in our country was so falsified that if one had conducted a mass survey to ask which side the Russian émigrés were on in the Spanish Civil War, or else, perhaps, what side they were on in the Second World War, with one voice everyone would have replied: For Franco! For Hitler! Even now people in our country do not know that many more White émigrés fought on the Republican side in Spain. That both the Vlasov divisions and the Cossack corps of von Pannwitz (the "Krasnov" corps) were made up of Soviet citizens and not of émigrés. The émigrés did not support Hitler. They ostracized Merezhkovsky and Gippius, who took Hitler's part, leaving them to alienated loneliness. There was a joke—except it wasn't a joke—to the effect that Denikin wanted to fight for the Soviet Union against Hitler, and that at one time Stalin planned to arrange his return to the Motherland, not for military reasons, obviously, but as a symbol of national unity. During the German occupation of France, a horde of Russian émigrés, young and old, joined the Resistance. And after the liberation of Paris they swarmed to the Soviet Embassy to apply for permission to return to the Motherland. No matter what kind of Russia it was—it was still Russia! That was their slogan, and that is how they proved they had not been lying previously about their love for her. (Imprisoned in 1945 and 1946, they were almost happy that these prison bars and these jailers were their own, Russian. And they observed with surprise the Soviet boys scratching their heads and saying: "Why the hell did we come back? Wasn't there room enough for us in Europe?")

But, given that Stalinist logic which said that every Soviet person who had lived abroad had to be imprisoned in camp, how could the émigrés possibly escape the same lot? In the Balkans, Central Europe, Harbin, they were arrested as soon as the Soviet

armies arrived. They were arrested in their apartments and on the street, just like Soviet citizens. For a while State Security arrested only men, and not all of them, only those who had in one or another way revealed a political bias. Later on, their families were transported to exile in Russia, but some were left where they were in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. In France they were welcomed into Soviet citizenship with honors and flowers and sent back to the Motherland in comfort; and only when they got to the U.S.S.R. were they raked in. Things dragged out longer for the Shanghai émigrés. In 1945 Russian hands didn't reach that far. But a plenipotentiary from the Soviet government went to Shanghai and announced a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet extending forgiveness to all émigrés. Well, now, how could one refuse to believe that? The government certainly couldn't lie! Whether or not there actually was such a decree, it did not, in any case, tie the hands of the *Organs*. The Shanghai Russians expressed their delight. They were told they could take with them as many possessions as they wanted and whatever they wanted. They went home with automobiles—the country could put them to good use. They were told they could settle wherever they wanted to in the Soviet Union and, of course, work at any profession or trade. They were transported from Shanghai in steamships. The fate of the passengers varied. On some of the ships, for some reason, they were given no food at all. They also suffered various fates after reaching the port of Nakhodka (which was, incidentally, one of the main transit centers of Gulag). Almost all of them were loaded into freight cars, like prisoners, except that they had, as yet, no strict convoy, and there were no police dogs. Some of them were actually delivered to inhabited places, to cities, and allowed to live there for two or three years. Others were delivered in trainloads straight to their camps and were dumped out somewhere off a high embankment into the forest beyond the Volga, together with their white pianos and their jardinieres. In 1948–1949, the former Far Eastern émigrés who had until then managed to stay out of camps were scraped up to the last man.

As a nine-year-old boy I had read the small dark-blue books of V. V. Shulgin with more interest than I had read Jules Verne. At that time they were sold openly in our book stalls. His was

a voice from a world that had disappeared with such finality that not even the most extravagant fantasy could have projected that invisible point in the soundless corridors of the Big Lubyanka where his steps would intersect my own before twenty years had passed. True, I would not meet the man himself until another twenty years had gone by. But I had time to study attentively many émigrés, old and young, in the spring of 1945.

I underwent a medical examination with Captain Borshch and Colonel Mariyushkin. And the pitiful sight of their naked, wrinkled, dark-yellow bodies, not bodies any longer but mummies, has always remained before my eyes. They were arrested five minutes this side of the grave, so to speak, and brought to Moscow from several thousand miles away, and there in Moscow, in 1945, an interrogation was proceeding in the most serious way on . . . their struggle against Soviet power in 1919!

We have become so used to the piling up of injustices during interrogation and trial that we have ceased drawing any distinctions of degree between them. This captain and this colonel were veteran officers of the Tsar's Russian Army. They had both been over forty, and they had both served in the army for twenty years, when the telegraph brought them news that the Tsar had been overthrown in Petrograd. For twenty years they had served the Tsar according to their oath. And now, against their wills—for all we know, possibly muttering "Beat it! Scram!" to themselves—they swore loyalty to the Provisional Government. After that, no one asked them to swear any more oaths because the whole army fell apart. They didn't like the new scheme of things, wherein soldiers tore shoulder boards off officers and killed them, and it was natural for them to join other officers to fight against it. And it was natural for the Red Army to fight against them and push them into the sea. But in a country in which at least the rudiments of jurisprudence exist, what basis was there for *putting them on trial,* and a quarter of a century later at that? (They had lived as private persons all that time . . . Mariyushkin up to the very moment of his arrest. Borshch, to be sure, had turned up in a Cossack wagon train in Austria, but in a transport, with the old men and women, not in an armed unit.)

However, in 1945, in the very center of Soviet jurisdiction,

they were charged with: actions directed toward the *overthrow* of the government of the workers' and peasants' soviets; armed *incursion* into Soviet territory, in other words, not having immediately left Russia when Petrograd was declared Soviet; aiding the international bourgeoisie (which they had never seen even in their dreams); serving counterrevolutionary governments (i.e., their own generals, to whom they had been subordinate all their lives). And all these sections—Nos. 1, 2, 4, 13—of Article 58 were included in a Criminal Code adopted in 1926, that is, six to seven years *after the end* of the Civil War. This was a classic and unconscionable example of the *ex post facto* application of a law! In addition, Article 2 of the Code specified that it applied *only* to citizens taken into custody on the territory of the Russian Republic. But State Security's strong right arm had grabbed people who were in no wise Soviet citizens from all the countries of Europe and Asia.[14] And we won't even bring up the question of *statutes of limitations.* This question was provided for very flexibly—no statutes of limitations applied to Article 58. *("Why stir up the past indeed?")* Such statutes are invoked only in the case of our home-grown executioners, who have destroyed many, many more of their compatriots than did the whole Civil War.

Mariyushkin, at least, remembered everything clearly. He told us the details of being evacuated from Novorossisk. But Borshch had already descended into second childhood and prattled on and on about celebrating Easter in the Lubyanka: he had eaten only half his bread ration during Palm Sunday week and Holy Week and had set the rest of it aside, gradually replacing the stale pieces with fresh ones. Thus he had accumulated seven full rations when it came time to break the Lenten fast—and he had "feasted" for the three days of Easter.

I do not know what kind of White Guards they were in the Civil War, either of them, whether they were among the exceptional few who hung every tenth worker without trial and whipped the peasants, or whether they were the other kind, the soldierly majority. The fact that they were being interrogated and sentenced in Moscow was no proof of anything nor a matter

14. On this basis no single African leader has any assurance that we will not, ten years from now, promulgate a law in accordance with which we will put him on trial for what he does today. Yes. The Chinese, in fact, will promulgate precisely such laws—just give them the chance to reach out that far.

of any consequence. But if, from that time on, they had lived for a quarter of a century, not as retired officers, on pensions and with honor, but as homeless exiles, then how could anyone point to any moral basis for trying them? That is the kind of dialectic Anatole France mastered, but which we cannot seem to grasp. According to Anatole France, by the time it's today, yesterday's martyr is already in the wrong—in fact, from the first minute the red shirt covered his body. And vice versa. But our version is: If they rode me for one short year, when I had just outgrown being a foal, then I am called a riding horse all my life, even though I have long since been used only as a cab horse.

Colonel Konstantin Konstantinovich Yasevich was very different from these helpless émigré mummies. For him, clearly, the end of the Civil War had not ended the struggle against Bolshevism. As to how he continued to struggle—where and with what—he did not enlighten me. But the sense that he was still in the service remained with him in the cell itself. In the midst of all the chaotic concepts, the blurred and broken lines of vision, in most of our heads, he had, evidently, a clear and exact view of everything around him; as a result of this reasoned point of view on life, his body, too, exhibited a steady strength, resiliency, and activity. He was certainly not less than sixty. His head was totally bald, without a single hair. He had already survived his interrogation and was awaiting his sentence, like the rest of us. He could expect no help from anywhere, of course. But he kept his young, even rosy skin. Among all of us in the cell, he alone did exercises every morning and washed himself at the faucet. The rest of us were trying not to squander the calories in our prison ration. He put his time to use, and whenever an aisle opened up between the rows of board bunks, he paced those fifteen to twenty feet with a precise stride and a precise profile, crossing his arms over his chest and staring through the walls with clear young eyes.

And the difference between us and him was that we were all astonished at what was happening to us, while nothing around him contradicted his expectations, and precisely for that reason he was absolutely alone in the cell.

A year later, I was able to appraise his conduct in prison. Once again I was in the Butyrki, and in one of those seventy

cells I met some young codefendants of Yasevich who had already been sentenced to ten and fifteen years. The sentences given everyone in their group were typed out on cigarette paper, and for some reason they had it in their possession. Yasevich was first on the list, and his sentence was: to be shot. So that was what he saw—what he foresaw—through the wall with his still-young eyes as he paced back and forth from the table to the door! But his unimpaired consciousness of the correctness of his path in life lent him extraordinary strength.

Among the émigrés was one my own age, Igor Tronko. We became friends. Both of us were weak, dried out; our skin was grayish-yellow on our bones. (Why had we collapsed to such an extent? I think the main cause was spiritual confusion.) Both of us were thin and on the tall side, and we were shaken by the gusts of summer wind in the Butyrki courtyards. We always walked side by side, with the careful steps of old men, and discussed the parallels in our lives. He had been born in South Russia the same year as I. We were still nursing babes when fate stuck her hand into her well-worn purse and drew out a short straw for me and a long one for him. So it was that he rolled off across the sea, even though his White Guard father was just a rank-and-file, unpropertied telegrapher.

I found it interesting in the extreme to picture through his life all those compatriots of my generation who had landed outside Russia. They had grown up under good family supervision and in very modest, even meager, circumstances. They were all very well brought up and, within the range of existing possibilities, well educated. They grew up without knowing fear or repression, though the White organizations maintained a certain yoke of authority over them until they themselves grew strong. They grew up in such a way that the sins to which all European youth was subject in that period—a high crime rate, a frivolous attitude toward life, thoughtlessness, dissipation—did not touch them. That was because they grew up, so to speak, in the shadow of the indelible misfortune which had befallen their families. Whatever country they grew up in, they looked on Russia alone as their Motherland. Their spiritual upbringing was based on Russian literature, all the more beloved because to them it was the beginning and end of their Motherland, because

for them their Motherland did not exist as a primary geographical and physical fact. The contemporary printed word was much more generally accessible to them than to us, but they received Soviet books in conspicuously small quantities. And they felt this lack all the more keenly; it seemed to them chiefly responsible for their inability to understand what was most important, highest, and most beautiful in Soviet Russia; and that the books they did receive presented a distortion, a lie; were incomplete. The picture they had of our real life was very, very faint, but their longing for their Motherland was such that if we had called on them in 1941 they would all have joined the Red Army, and it would have been even sweeter for them to die than to survive. These young people from twenty-five to twenty-seven already represented and firmly defended several points of view, in definite conflict with the opinions of the old generals and political leaders. Thus Igor's group was called the "nepredreshentsy"—the "non-prejudgers": they declared that anyone who had not shared with the Motherland the whole, complex burden of the past decades had no right to decide anything about the future of Russia, nor even to presuppose anything, but should simply go and lend his strength to whatever the people might decide.

We would often lie beside one another on the wooden bunks. I tried to understand his world as best I could, and our encounter revealed to me a concept confirmed by later encounters—that the outflow from Russia of a significant part of her spiritual forces, which occurred in the Civil War, had deprived us of a great and important stream of Russian culture. Everyone who really loves that culture will strive for the reunion of both streams, the one at home and the tributary abroad. Only then will our culture attain wholeness. Only then will it reveal its capacity for benign development.

And I dream of living until that day.

■

A human being is weak, weak. In the end, that spring, even the most stubborn of us wanted forgiveness and were ready to give up a lot for just a little bit more life. An anecdote was current among us: "What is your last word, accused?" "I beg you to

send me wherever you please, just as long as it is under the Soviet government and the sun is there!" No one was threatening to deprive us of the Soviet government, of course: just of the sun. No one wanted to be sent beyond the Arctic Circle, to scurvy and malnutrition. For some reason, a legend about the Altai region in particular flourished in the cells. Those rare persons who had been there at one time or another, but especially those who had never been there, wove melodious dreams about the wonderful country of the Altai for their cellmates! It had the vast expanses of Siberia and a mild climate. Rivers of honey flowing between banks of wheat. The steppe and mountains. Herds of sheep, flocks of wildfowl, shoals of fish. Populous, rich villages.[15]

Oh, if only we could find a hiding place in that quiet! If only we could listen to the pure resounding of the cock crow in the unpolluted air! Or stroke the good, serious face of a horse! Curses on you, all you great problems! Let someone else beat his head against you, someone more stupid. Oh, just to rest there from the interrogator's mother oaths and the monotonous unwinding of your whole life, from the crash of the prison locks, from the suffocating stuffiness of the cell. Only one life is allotted us, one small, short life! And we had been criminal enough to push ours in front of somebody's machine guns, or drag it with us, still unsullied, into the dirty rubbish heap of politics. There, in the Altai, it appeared, one could live in the lowest, darkest hut on the edge of the village, next to the forest. And one could go into the woods, not for brushwood and not for mushrooms, but just to go, for no reason, and hug two tree trunks: Dear ones, you're all I need.

And the spring itself sounded a summons to mercy. It was the spring that marked the ending of such an enormous war! We saw that millions of us prisoners were flowing past and knew that millions more would greet us in the camps. It just couldn't be that so many people were to remain in prison after the greatest

15. Does not the prisoner's dream of the Altai simply continue the old peasant dream about it? The so-called lands of His Majesty's Cabinet were in the Altai, and because of this the area was closed to colonization much longer than the rest of Siberia. But it was there that the peasants wanted most of all to settle—and where they actually settled. Is it not from this that the enduring legend has arisen?

victory in the world! It was just to frighten us that they were holding us for the time being: so that we might remember and take heed. Of course, there would soon be a total amnesty and all of us would be released. Someone even swore that he had read in a newspaper that Stalin, replying to some American correspondent (whose name I cannot remember), said that after the war there would be an amnesty the like of which the world had never seen. And one of the interrogators had actually said to someone else that there would soon be a general amnesty. (These rumors were a help to the interrogators because they weakened the prisoners' will: The hell with him, let's sign—it isn't going to be for long anyway.)

But . . . *for mercy one must have wisdom.* This has been a truth throughout our history and will remain one for a long time to come.

We did not heed the few sober minds among us who croaked out that never, in a whole quarter-century, had there been an amnesty for political prisoners—and that there never would be one. Some cell expert among the stool pigeons leaped up with an answer: "Yes, there was! In 1927. For the tenth anniversary of the Revolution. All the prisons were emptied, and *white flags were flown on all of them.*" This astonishing vision of white flags on the prisons—why white?—was particularly striking.[16] We brushed aside those wise individuals among us who explained that millions of us were imprisoned precisely because the war had ended. We were no longer needed at the front. We were dangerous in the rear. And, were it not for us, not one brick would ever get laid at the remote construction projects. We were too self-absorbed even to grasp Stalin's simple economic calculations—let alone his malice. Just who this year, after being demobilized, would want to leave his family and home and go off to the Kolyma, to Vorkuta, to Siberia, where there were neither roads

16. Vyshinsky, *Ot Tyurem k Vospitatelnym Uchrezhdeniyam,* p. 396, presents the figures. In the 1927 amnesty, 7.3 percent of the prisoners were amnestied. This is a credible figure. Pretty poor for a tenth anniversary. Among the political prisoners, women with children were freed and those who had only a few months left to serve. In the Verkhne-Uralsk Prison Isolator, for example, twelve out of the two hundred prisoners there were released. But, in the middle of it, they regretted even this wretched amnesty and began to *block it:* they delayed some releases, and some people who were freed were given a "minus" restriction instead of full freedom to go where they pleased.

nor houses? It was virtually the job of the State Planning Commission to assign to the MVD the number of workers required for plan fulfillment and thus the number to be arrested. An amnesty, a broad and generous amnesty, was what we waited for and thirsted for! Somebody said that in England prisoners were amnestied on the anniversary of the coronation, in other words, every year. Many politicals had been amnestied on the three hundredth anniversary of the Romanovs, in 1912. Could it really be possible that now, after we had won a victory which would resound throughout our entire era and even longer, the Stalin government would be petty and vengeful and would hang onto its resentment of every stumble and slip of each of its minuscule subjects?

There is a simple truth which one can learn only through suffering: in war not victories are blessed but defeats. Governments need victories and the people need defeats. Victory gives rise to the desire for more victories. But after a defeat it is freedom that men desire—and usually attain. A people needs defeat just as an individual needs suffering and misfortune: they compel the deepening of the inner life and generate a spiritual upsurge.

The Poltava victory was a great misfortune for Russia: it resulted in two centuries of great strain and stress, ruin, the absence of freedom—and war and war again. The Poltava victory spelled salvation for the Swedes. Having lost the appetite for war, the Swedes became the most prosperous and the freest people in Europe.[17]

We are so used to taking pride in our victory over Napoleon that we leave out of account the fact that because of it the emancipation of the serfs did not take place a half-century sooner. Because of it, the strengthened monarchy destroyed the Decembrists. (The French occupation was never a reality for Russia.) But the Crimean War, and the Japanese War, and our war with Germany in the First World War—all those defeats brought us freedom and revolution.

We believed in amnesty that spring, we weren't being at all original in this. Talking with old prisoners, one gradually discovers that this thirst for mercy and this faith in mercy is never absent within gray prison walls. For decades and decades, wave

17. Perhaps, only in the twentieth century, if one is to believe the stories one hears, has their stagnating well-being led to moral indigestion.

after wave of prisoners has thirsted for and believed in either an amnesty, or a new Code, or a general review of cases. And the rumors about these things have always been supported by the Organs with skilled caution. The prisoner's imagination sees the ardently awaited arrival of the angel of liberation in just about anything: the next anniversary of the October Revolution, Lenin's anniversaries, Victory Day, Red Army Day, Paris Commune Day, every new session of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee—the VTsIK—the end of every Five-Year Plan, every Plenary Session of the Supreme Court! And the wilder the arrests, the more Homeric and mind-boggling the scale of the waves of prisoners, the more they inspired not sober-mindedness but faith in amnesty!

All sources of light can to some degree be compared with the Sun. And the Sun cannot be compared with anything. So it is that all the expectations in the world can be compared with the expectation of amnesty, but the expectation of amnesty cannot be compared with anything else.

In the spring of 1945, every newcomer to the cell was asked first of all what he had heard about an amnesty. And if two or three prisoners were taken from their cells *with their things,* the cell experts immediately compared *cases* and drew the conclusion that theirs were the *least serious* cases and they had clearly been taken out to be released. *It had begun!* In the toilet and in the baths—the prisoners' post offices—our "activists" looked everywhere for signs and graffiti about the amnesty. And one day at the beginning of July, in the famous lavender vestibule of the Butyrki baths, we read the enormous prophecy written in soap on a glazed lavender slab far higher than a man's head—which meant that one man had stood on another's shoulders in order to write it in a place where it would take longer to erase:

"Hurrah!! Amnesty on July 17!"[18]

What a celebration went on! ("After all, if they hadn't known for sure, they wouldn't have written it!") Everything that beat, pulsed, circulated in the body came to a stop beneath the wave of happiness, the expectation that the doors were about to swing open.

But . . . *for mercy one must have wisdom.*

18. Indeed, the bastards were wrong by only one digit! For more details on the great Stalin amnesty of July 7, 1945, see Part III, Chapter 6.

In the middle of July, the corridor jailer sent one old man from our cell to wash down the toilet, and while they were there eye to eye—for he wouldn't have dared in the presence of witnesses—he looked sympathetically at the prisoner's gray head and asked: "What's your article, father?" "Fifty-eight!" The old man lit up. At home three generations were mourning his arrest. "You're not included," sighed the jailer. Nonsense, we decided in the cell: just an illiterate jailer.

There was also a young man from Kiev in the cell, Valentin. I can't remember his family name. He had big eyes that were beautiful in a feminine way, and he was terrified by the interrogation. There is no doubt that he had the gift of precognition—perhaps only in his then current state of excitement. More than once, he went around the cell in the morning and pointed: Today they are going to come for you and you. I saw it in my dream. And they came and got them . . . the very individuals he had pointed out. One might add that a prisoner's heart is so inclined toward mysticism that he accepts precognition almost without surprise.

On July 27 Valentin came up to me: "Aleksandr! Today it is our turn." And he told me a dream that had all the characteristics of prison dreams: a bridge across a muddy stream, a cross. I began to get my things together. And it was not for nothing either. He and I were summoned after morning tea. Our cellmates saw us off with noisy good wishes, and many of them assured us we were going off to freedom. They had figured it out by comparing our *less serious* cases.

Perhaps you honestly don't believe it. Perhaps you won't allow yourself to believe. You can try to brush it aside with jokes. But flaming pincers, hotter than anything else on earth, suddenly close around your heart. They just do. Suppose it's true?

They assembled twenty of us from various cells and took us to the baths first. Before every big change in his life, the prisoner has first of all to take a bath. We had time enough there, an hour and a half, to exchange our hunches and ideas. At that point, all steamed up, our skins tender, we were taken through the little emerald park in the Butyrki's interior courtyard, where the birds sang deafeningly, although they were probably only sparrows, and the green of the trees seemed unbearably bright to eyes no longer used to it. Never had my eyes seen the green of the leaves

with such intensity as they did that spring! And never in my life had I seen anything closer to God's paradise than that little Butyrki park, which never took more than thirty seconds to cross on the asphalt path.[19]

They took us to the Butyrki *station*—a very well-chosen nickname for that reception and dispatch point, especially because its main hall was really like a good railroad station. They pushed us into a large, spacious box. It was half-dark inside and the air was clean and fresh, since its one and only little window was very high up and had no "muzzle." And it opened on that same sunny little park, and through the transom the birds' twitter deafened us, and in the opening a little bright-green twig hung, promising us all freedom and home. (We had never been imprisoned in such a good box—and that couldn't be a matter of chance!)

And we were all cases for the OSO's—the Special Boards attached to the GPU-NKVD. And it turned out that each of us had been imprisoned for nothing much.

No one touched us for three hours. No one opened the doors. We paced up and down the box and, finally, tired out, we sat down on the slab benches. And the little twig kept bobbing and bobbing outside the opening, and the sparrows screamed as if they were possessed.

Suddenly the door crashed open, and one of us was summoned, a quiet bookkeeper, thirty-five years old. He went out. The door was locked. We started running about our box even more agitatedly than before. We were on hot coals.

Once more the crash of the door. They called another one out and readmitted the first. We rushed to him. But he was not the same man! The life had gone out of his face. His wide-open eyes were unseeing. His movements were uncertain as he stumbled across the smooth floor of the box. Was he in a state of shock? Had they swatted him with an ironing board?

"Well? Well?" we asked him, with sinking hearts. (If he had not in fact just gotten up from the electric chair, he must at the

19. Many years later, this time as a tourist, I saw another, similar park, except that it was even smaller, in the Trubetskoi bastion of the Peter and Paul Fortress in Leningrad. The other tourists exclaimed over the darkness of the corridors and cells, but I kept thinking to myself that with *such* a park to walk in, the prisoners of the Trubetskoi bastion were not lost men. *We* were taken out to walk only in deathly cell-like stone enclosures.

very least have been given a death sentence.) And in the voice of one reporting the end of the universe, the bookkeeper managed to blurt out:

"Five . . . years!"

And once more the door crashed. That was how quickly they returned, as if they were only being taken to the toilet to urinate. The second man returned, all aglow. Evidently he was being released.

"Well, well, come on?" We swarmed around him, our hopes rising again. He waved his hand, choking with laughter.

"Fifteen years!"

It was just too absurd to be believed.

Chapter 7

■

In the Engine Room

The box adjacent to the so-called Butyrki "station" was the famous *frisking* box, where new arrivals were searched. It had space enough for five or six jailers to process up to twenty zeks in one batch. Now, however, it was empty and the rough-hewn search tables had nothing on them. Over at one side of the room, seated behind a small nondescript table beneath a small lamp, was a neat, black-haired NKVD major. Patient boredom was what his face chiefly revealed. The intervals during which the zeks were brought in and led out one by one were a waste of his time. Their signatures could have been collected much, much faster.

He indicated that I was to sit down on the stool opposite him, on the other side of his table. He asked my name. To the right and left of the inkwell lay two piles of white papers the size of a half-sheet of typewriter paper, all looking much the same. In format they were just like the fuel requisitions handed out in apartment-house management offices, or warrants in official institutions for purchase of office supplies. Leafing through the pile on the right, the major found the paper which referred to me. He pulled it out and read it aloud to me in a bored patter. (I understood I had been sentenced to eight years.) Immediately, he began to write a statement on the back of it, with a fountain pen, to the effect that the text had been read to me on the particular date.

My heart didn't give an extra half-beat—it was all so everyday and routine. Could this really be my sentence—the turning point

in my life? I would have liked to feel nervous, to experience this moment to the full, but I just couldn't. And the major had already pushed the sheet over to me, the blank side facing up. And a schoolchild's seven-kopeck pen, with a bad point that had lint on it from the inkwell, lay there in front of me.

"No, I have to read it myself."

"Do you really think I would deceive you?" the major objected lazily. "Well, go ahead, read it."

Unwillingly, he let the paper out of his hand. I turned it over and began to look through it with deliberate slowness, not just word by word but letter by letter. It had been typed, but what I had in front of me was not the original but a carbon:

EXTRACT
from a decree of the OSO of the NKVD of the U.S.S.R.
of July 7, 1945,[1] No. ——.

All of this was underscored with a dotted line and the sheet was vertically divided with a dotted line:

Case heard:	Decreed:
Accusation of so-and-so (name, year of birth, place of birth)	To designate for so-and-so (name) for anti-Soviet propaganda, and for an attempt to create an anti-Soviet organization, 8 (eight) years in corrective labor camps.

Copy verified. Secretary_____

Was I really just supposed to sign and leave in silence? I looked at the major—to see whether he intended to say something to me, whether he might not provide some clarification. No, he had no such intention. He had already nodded to the jailer at the door to get the next prisoner ready.

To give the moment at least a little importance, I asked him, with a tragic expression: "But, really, this is terrible! Eight years! What for?"

And I could hear how false my own words sounded. Neither he nor I detected anything terrible.

"Right there." The major showed me once again where to sign.

I signed. I could simply not think of anything else to do.

1. They had met to sentence me on the very day of the amnesty. The work must go on. . . .

"In that case, allow me to write an appeal right here. After all, the sentence is unjust."

"As provided by regulations," the major assented with a nod, placing my sheet of paper on the left-hand pile.

"Let's move along," commanded the jailer.

And I *moved along.*

(I had not really shown much initiative. Georgi Tenno, who, to be sure, had been handed a paper worth twenty-five years, answered: "After all, this is a life sentence. In olden times they used to beat the drums and assemble a crowd when a person was given a life sentence. And here it's like being on a list for a soap ration—twenty-five years and run along!"

Arnold Rappoport took the pen and wrote on the back of the verdict: "I protest categorically this terroristic, illegal sentence and demand immediate release." The officer who had handed it to him had at first waited patiently, but when he read what Rappoport had written, he was enraged and tore up the paper with the note on it. So what! The term remained in force anyway. This was just a copy.

Vera Korneyeva was expecting *fifteen* years and she saw with delight that there was a typo on the official sheet—it read only *five.* She laughed her luminous laugh and hurried to sign before they took it back. The officer looked at her dubiously: "Do you really understand what I read to you?" "Yes, yes, thank you very much. Five years in corrective-labor camps."

The ten-year sentence of Janos Rozsas, a Hungarian, was read to him in the corridor in Russian, without any translation. He signed it, not knowing it was his sentence, and he waited a long time afterward for his trial. Still later, when he was in camp, he recalled the incident very vaguely and realized what had happened.)

I returned to the box with a smile. It was strange. Each minute I became jollier and more relieved. Everyone was returning with "ten-ruble bills," including Valentin. The lightest term in our group that day had been given the bookkeeper who had gone out of his mind. He was still, in fact, beside himself. And the lightest term after his was mine.

In the splashes of sun and the July breeze, the little twig outside the window continued to bob up and down as gaily as before. We chattered boisterously. Here and there, more and more fre-

quently, laughter resounded in the box. We were laughing because everything had gone off so smoothly. We were laughing at the shocked bookkeeper. We were laughing at our morning hopes and at the way our cellmates had seen us off and arranged secret signals with us to be transmitted via food parcels—four potatoes or two bagels!

"Well, anyway, there is going to be an amnesty!" several affirmed. "All this is just for form's sake and it doesn't mean anything. They want to give us a good scare so we'll keep in line. Stalin told an American correspondent—"

"What was his name?"

"I don't remember his name."

So they ordered us to take our things, formed us up by twos, and led us once again through that same marvelous little park filled with summer. And where did they take us? Once again to the *baths.*

And, oh, what a peal of laughter that got! My God, what silly nincompoops! Still roaring, we undressed, hung our duds on the same trolley hooks and rolled them into the same roaster they'd already been rolled into that very morning. Roaring, each of us took a small sliver of repulsive soap and went into the spacious, resonant shower room to wash off our girlish gaiety. We splashed about in there, pouring hot clean water on ourselves, and we got to romping about as if we were school kids who had come to the baths after their last exam. This cleansing, relieving laughter was, I think, not really sick but a living defense for the salvation of the organism.

As we dried ourselves off, Valentin said to me, reassuringly, intimately: "Well, all right. We are still young. We are going to live a long time yet. The main thing is not to make a misstep *now.* We are going to a camp—and we'll not say *one word* to anyone, so they won't plaster new terms on us. *We will work honestly—and keep our mouths shut."*

And he really believed in his program, that naïve little kernel of grain caught between Stalin's millstones! He really had his hopes set on it. One wanted to agree with him, to serve out the term cozily, and then expunge from one's head what one had lived through.

But I had begun to sense a truth inside myself: if in order to live it is necessary *not to live,* then what's it all for?

■

One cannot really say that the OSO had been conceived after the Revolution. Catherine the Great had sentenced the journalist Novikov, whom she disliked, to fifteen years on, one might say, an OSO basis, since she didn't turn him over to a court. And all the Tsars once in a while, in a fatherly way, exiled without any trial those who had incurred their displeasure. In the 1860's, a basic court reform took place. It seemed as if rulers and subjects had both begun to develop something like a juridical view of society. And yet in the seventies and eighties Korolenko tracked down cases where administrative repression had usurped the role of judicial judgment. In 1872, he himself and two other students were exiled without trial, on the orders of the Deputy Minister of State Properties—a typical case of an OSO. Another time, he and his brother were exiled without trial to Glazov. Korolenko has also given us the name of one Fyodor Bogdan, an emissary from the peasants—a khodok—who got right up to the Tsar himself and was then exiled. And of Pyankov, too, who was acquitted by a court and yet exiled by order of the Tsar. And there were several others as well. And Vera Zasulich explained in a letter sent after she emigrated that she had not run away from the court and a trial but from nonjudicial administrative repression.

Thus the tradition of the "dotted line"—the administratively issued sentence—dragged on. But it was too lax; it was suitable for a drowsy Asiatic country, but not for a country that was rapidly advancing. . . . Moreover, it lacked any definite identity: *who* was the OSO? Sometimes it was the Tsar, sometimes the governor, sometimes the deputy minister. And if it was still possible to *enumerate* names and cases, this was not, begging your pardon, real scope.

Real scope entered the picture with the twenties, when *permanently* operating *Troikas*—panels of three, operating behind closed doors—were created to bypass the courts permanently. In the beginning they even flaunted it proudly—*the Troika of the GPU*. Not only did they not conceal the names of the members; they publicized them. Who on the Solovetsky Islands did not know the names of the famous Moscow Troika—Gleb Boky,

Vul, and Vasilyev? Yes, and what a word it was, in fact—*troika!* It bore a slight hint of sleigh bells on the shaft bow; the celebration of Shrovetide; and, interwoven with all this, a mystery. Why "troika"? What did it mean? After all, a court wasn't a quartet either! And a Troika wasn't a court! And the biggest mystery of all lay in the fact that it was kept out of sight. We hadn't been there. We hadn't seen it. All we got was a piece of paper. Sign here! The Troika was even more frightening than a Revolutionary Tribunal. It set itself even farther apart, muffled itself up, locked itself in a separate room, and—soon—concealed the names of its members. Thus we grew used to the idea that the Troika members didn't eat or drink or move about among ordinary people. Once they had isolated themselves in order to go into session, they were shut off for good, and all we knew of them were the sentences handed out through typists. (And they had to be returned too. Such documents couldn't be left in the hands of individuals!)

These Troikas (we use the plural just in case, because—as with a deity—we never know where or in what form it exists) satisfied a persistent need that had arisen: never to allow those arrested to return to freedom (This was like an OTK—a Department for Quality Control in industry—but in this case it was attached to the GPU—to prevent any *spoiled goods.*) If it turned out that someone was innocent and could therefore not be tried at all, then let him have his "minus 32" via the Troika—which meant he couldn't live in any of the provincial capitals—or let him spend two or three years in exile, after which he would have a convict's clipped ear, would always be a marked man, and, from then on, a recidivist.

(Please forgive us, reader. We have once more gone astray with this rightist opportunism—this concept of "guilt," and of the guilty or innocent. It has, after all, been explained to us that *the heart of the matter is not personal guilt, but social danger.* One can imprison an innocent person if he is socially hostile. And one can release a guilty man if he is socially friendly. But lacking legal training, we can be forgiven, for the 1926 Code, according to which, my good fellow, we lived for twenty-five years and more, was itself criticized for an "impermissible bourgeois approach," for an "insufficiently class-conscious approach," and for some

kind of "bourgeois weighing of punishments in relation to the gravity of what had been committed.")[2]

Alas, it is not for us to write the absorbing history of this particular *Organ*: how the Troikas turned into OSO's; or when they got renamed; or whether there were OSO's in provincial centers, or just one of them in the Great Palace; or which of our great and proud leaders were members; or how often they met and how long their sessions lasted; whether or not they were served tea while they worked, and if they were, what was served with the tea; and how the work itself proceeded—did they converse while it was going on or not? We are not the ones who will write this history—because we don't know. All that we have heard is that the essence of the OSO was triune. And even though it is still impossible to name its industrious members, yet we do know the three organs permanently represented there: one member represented the Central Committee of the Party, one the MVD, and one the Chief Prosecutor's office. However, it would not be a miracle if we should learn someday that there were never any sessions, and that there was only a staff of experienced typists composing extracts from nonexistent records of proceedings, and one general administrator who directed the typists. As for typists, there were certainly typists. That we can guarantee.

Up to 1924, the authority of the Troika was limited to sentences of three years, maximum. From 1924 on, they moved up to five years of camp; from 1937 on, the OSO could turn out "ten-ruble bills"; after 1948, they could rivet a "quarter"—twenty-five years—on you. And there are people—Chavdarov, for example—who know that during the war years the OSO even sentenced prisoners to execution by shooting. Nothing unusual about this.

The OSO was nowhere mentioned in either the Constitution or the Code. However, it turned out to be the most convenient kind of hamburger machine—easy to operate, undemanding, and requiring no legal lubrication. The Code existed on its own, and the OSO existed on its own, and it kept on deftly grinding without all the Code's 205 articles, neither invoking them nor even mentioning them.

2. Vyshinsky, *Ot Tyurem k Vospitatelnym Uchrezhdeniyam.*

As they used to joke in camp: "There is no court for nothing —for that there is an OSO."

Of course, the OSO itself also needed for convenience some kind of operational shorthand, but for that purpose it worked out on its own a dozen "letter" articles which made operations very much simpler. It wasn't necessary, when they were used, to cudgel your brains trying to make things fit the formulations of the Code. And they were few enough to be easily remembered by a child. Some of them we have already described:

ASA —Anti-Soviet Agitation
KRD —Counter-Revolutionary Activity
KRTD—Counter-Revolutionary Trotskyite Activity (And that "T" made the life of a zek in camp much harder.)
PSh —Suspicion of Espionage (Espionage that went beyond the bounds of suspicion was handed over to a tribunal.)
SVPSh—Contacts Leading (!) to Suspicion of Espionage
KRM —Counter-Revolutionary Thought
VAS —Dissemination of Anti-Soviet Sentiments
SOE —Socially Dangerous Element
SVE —Socially Harmful Element
PD —Criminal Activity (a favorite accusation against former camp inmates if there was nothing else to be used against them)

And then, finally, there was the very expansive category:

ChS —Member of a Family (of a person convicted under one of the foregoing "letter" categories)

It has to be remembered that these categories were not applied uniformly and equally among different groups and in different years. But, as with the articles of the Code and the sections in special decrees, they broke out in sudden epidemics.

There is one more qualification. The OSO did not claim to be handing down a *sentence.* It did not sentence a person but, instead, *imposed an administrative penalty.* And that was the whole thing in a nutshell. Therefore it was, of course, natural for it to have juridical independence!

But even though they did not claim that the administrative

penalty was a court sentence, it could be up to twenty-five years and include:

- Deprivation of titles, ranks, and decorations
- Confiscation of all property
- Imprisonment
- Deprivation of the right to correspond

Thus a person could disappear from the face of the earth with the help of the OSO even more reliably than under the terms of some primitive court sentence.

The OSO enjoyed another important advantage in that its penalty could not be appealed. There was nowhere to appeal to. There was no appeals jurisdiction above it, and no jurisdiction beneath it. It was subordinate only to the Minister of Internal Affairs, to Stalin, and to Satan.

Another big advantage the OSO had was speed. This speed was limited only by the technology of typewriting.

And, last but not least, not only did the OSO not have to confront the accused face to face, which lessened the burden on interprison transport: it didn't even have to have his photograph. At a time when the prisons were badly overcrowded, this was a great additional advantage because the prisoner did not have to take up space on the prison floor, or eat free bread once his interrogation had been completed. He could be sent off to camp immediately and put to honest work. The copy of the sentence could be read to him much later.

It used to be that in favorable conditions the prisoners were unloaded from freight cars at their destinations. And they were made to kneel down right there, next to the tracks—as a precaution against attempted escape. But it looked as if they were praying to the OSO. And then and there their sentences were read out to them. It could also happen differently. In 1938 those who arrived at Perebory on prisoner transports did not know either their Code articles or their sentences, but the clerk who met them knew, and he looked them up on the list: SVE—Socially Harmful Element—five years. That was during the time when there was an urgent need for many hands to work on the Moscow-Volga Canal.

Others worked in the camps for months without knowing their sentences. After this, as I. Dobryak reported, they were solemnly lined up—and not just on any old day, but on May 1, 1938, when the red flags were flying—and the Stalino Province Troika's sentences were announced. (This would indicate that the OSO did get decentralized in times of heavy load.) These sentences were from ten to twenty years apiece. And in that same year, my former camp foreman, Sinebryukhov, was sent off with a whole trainload of unsentenced prisoners from Chelyabinsk to Cherepovets. Months passed and the zeks worked away. And then one rest day in winter (Note the days? Another advantage of the OSO), when the frost was cracking, they were driven out into the courtyard and lined up. A newly arrived lieutenant appeared and introduced himself as having come to inform them of their OSO penalties. But he turned out to be a decent sort because he squinted at their thin footwear and at the sun's rays in the steaming frost and said:

"Well anyway, men, why should you freeze out here? The OSO gave you all ten years apiece. There are just a very, very few who got eight. You understand? Disssperse!"

■

But in view of the frankly mechanical operation of the Special Board, why have any courts at all? Why use a horsecar when there's a noiseless modern streetcar available, which no one can jump out of? Is it a matter of keeping the judges well fed?

Still, it is really quite indecent for a democratic state not to have courts. In 1919, the Eighth Congress of the Party proclaimed in its program: Efforts must be made *to involve all the working population* in the exercise of judicial duties. It did not prove possible to involve "all" the working population. Conducting a trial is a delicate business. But there was no question of getting along entirely without courts.

However, our political courts—the special collegia of provincial courts, the military tribunals (and why, actually, should there be military tribunals in peacetime anyway?), and all the supreme courts too—unanimously followed the path of the OSO. They, too, did not get stuck in the mud of public trials or in arguments between sides.

Their primary and principal distinguishing feature was closed doors. They were first of all *closed courts*—for their own convenience.

And by now we have become so accustomed to the fact that millions and millions of people were tried in closed sessions and have become used to this for so long that now and then some mixed-up son, brother, or nephew of a prisoner will even snort at you with conviction: "And what would you have wanted? . . . There's *information* here. Our enemies will find out! You can't do it!"

Thus the fear that our "enemies will find out" makes us clamp our head between our own knees. Who in our Fatherland, except some bookworms, remembers now that Karakozov, who fired at the Tsar, was provided with a defense lawyer? Or that Zhelyabov and all the Narodnaya Volya group were tried in public, without any fear that the "Turks would find out"? Or that Vera Zasulich, who attempted to kill the official who was, translated into Soviet terms, the Chief of the Moscow Administration of the MVD—although she missed, and the bullet went past his head—not only was not destroyed in a torture chamber but was *acquitted* in *open* court by a jury—no Troika—and then went off in triumph in a carriage?

Despite these comparisons, I do not at all mean to say that a perfect system of courts and justice ever existed in Russia. In all probability, an excellent judicial system is the last fruit of the most mature society, or else one needs a Solomon. Vladimir Dal notes that in the period before the emancipation of the serfs Russia had "not one single proverb containing any praise of the courts." And that really means something. It seems likely that they never had time to get around to making up a proverb praising the zemstvo chiefs either. But, nevertheless, the judicial reform of 1864 at least set the urban sector of our society on the road toward those English models which Herzen praised so highly.

Saying all this, I still have not forgotten what Dostoyevsky had to say in his *Diary of a Writer* against our trials by jury: about the excesses of some lawyers' eloquence ("Gentlemen of the jury! What kind of woman would she have been if she had not stabbed her rival? Gentlemen of the jury! Who among you would not have thrown the child out of the window?"); and the risk that a juror's momentary impulse might outweigh his civic responsibility. But

spiritually Dostoyevsky far outstripped the realities of our life, and he worried about what he shouldn't have worried about! He believed that we had achieved open trials once and for all! (Indeed, who among his contemporaries could have believed in the OSO?) And somewhere else he writes: "It is better to err on the side of mercy than on that of the death penalty." Oh, yes, yes, yes!

Excesses of eloquence do not afflict exclusively a judicial system in process of being established; even more conspicuously, they afflict an already established democracy that has not yet discovered its moral goals. England again gives us examples, as when, for partisan advantage, the leader of the opposition does not hesitate to blame the government for a national predicament worse than actually exists.

Excesses of eloquence are a malady. But what word can we then use for the excessive use of closed doors? Dostoyevsky dreamed of a court in which everything essential to the *defense* of the accused would be set forth by the *prosecutor*. How many aeons will we have to wait for that? Our social experience has so far enriched us immeasurably with *defense lawyers* who *accuse* the defendant. ("As an honest Soviet person, as a true patriot, I cannot but feel repugnance at the disclosure of these evil deeds.")

And how comfortable it all is for the judges in a closed session! Judicial robes are not required and one can even roll up one's sleeves. How easy it is to work! There are no public-address systems, no newspapermen, and no public. (Well, there is a public, an audience, but it consists of *interrogators*. For example, they used to attend the Leningrad Province Court during the day to find out how their "protégés" were conducting themselves, and at night went calling on those prisoners who needed to have their *consciences appealed to.*)[3]

The second main characteristic of our political courts is the lack of ambiguity in their work, which is to say predetermined verdicts.[4] In other words, you, a judge, always know what the

3. Ch——n's group.

4. That same collection edited by A. Y. Vyshinsky, *Ot Tyurem k Vospitatelnym Uchrezhdeniyam,* includes materials indicating that the predetermination of verdicts is an old, old story. In 1924–1929, sentences were determined by joint administrative and economic considerations. Beginning in 1924, because of

higher-ups expect of you (furthermore there's a telephone if you still have any doubts). And, following the example of the OSO's, sentences might even be typed out ahead of time, with only the prisoner's name to be added later, by hand. And in 1942 Strakhovich cried out during a session of the military tribunal of the Leningrad Military District: "But I could not have been recruited by Ignatovsky when I was only ten years old!" But the presiding judge barked back: "Don't slander the Soviet intelligence service!" The whole thing had been predetermined long before: each and every one of the Ignatovsky group was to be sentenced to be shot. Some man named Lipov got included in the group, but *no one* from the group *knew him* and he knew *none* of them either. Well, so, all right, Lipov got ten years.

How hugely the predetermination of sentences contributed to easing the thorny life of a judge. It wasn't so much a mental relief, in the sense that one didn't have to think, as it was a moral relief. You didn't have to torture yourself with worry that you might make a mistake in a sentence and make orphans out of your own little children. And the predetermination of sentences could dispose even so immovable a judge as Ulrikh to good humor. (And what major execution had he not pronounced?) In 1945, the Military Collegium was hearing the case of the "Estonian separatists." Short, stocky, good-humored Ulrikh was presiding. He didn't pass up a single opportunity to joke not only with his colleagues but also with the prisoners. (After all, that's what humaneness is! A new trait—where had it ever been seen?) Having learned that Susi was a lawyer, he said to him with a smile: "Well, so now your profession can be of some use to you!" Well, there is no need to quarrel. Why be embittered? The court routine proceeded pleasantly. They smoked right at the judge's table, and at a con-

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national *unemployment*, the courts reduced the number of verdicts which sentenced prisoners to corrective labor while they continued to live at home and increased short-term prison sentences. These cases involved only nonpolitical offenders, of course. As a result, prisons were overcrowded with short-termers serving sentences of up to six months, and not enough use was being made of them in labor colonies. At the beginning of 1929, the People's Commissariat of Justice of the U.S.S.R., in Circular No. 5, *condemned* short-term sentences and, on November 6, 1929, the eve of the twelfth anniversary of the October Revolution, when the country was supposedly entering on the construction of socialism, a decree of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars simply *forbade* all sentences of less than one year!

venient moment broke off for a good lunch. And when evening began to fall, they had to go and *confer*. But who confers at night? They left the prisoners to sit at their desks all night long and went on home. At nine in the morning they came in all brisk and freshly shaved: "Rise. The court is in session." And all the prisoners were given a "ten-ruble bill" apiece.

And if anyone should object that the OSO at least proceeded without hypocrisy, whereas there was hypocrisy in instances like the above—they pretended to be conferring but didn't really confer—we would certainly have to enter a strong—very strong—dissent!

Well, the third and final characteristic is *dialectics*. (Which used to be crudely described in the folk saying: "Whichever way you point a wagon tongue, that's the way it goes.") The Code cannot be a dead weight in the path of the judge. The articles of the Code had been around during ten, fifteen, twenty years of rapid change, and, just as Faust said:

> The whole world changes and everything moves forward,
> And why should I be afraid to break my word?

All the articles of the Code had become encrusted with interpretations, directions, instructions. And if the actions of the accused are not covered by the Code, he can still be convicted:

- By analogy (What opportunities!)
- Simply because of *origins* (7-35: belonging to a socially dangerous milieu)[5]
- For *contacts with dangerous persons*[6] (Here's scope for you! Who is "dangerous" and what "contacts" consist of only the judge can say.)

But one should not complain about the precise wording of our published laws either. On January 13, 1950, a decree was issued re-establishing capital punishment. (One is bound, of course, to

5. In the Republic of South Africa, terror has gone to such lengths in recent years that every *suspicious* (SDE—Socially Dangerous Element) black can be arrested and held for three *months* without investigation or trial. Anyone can see immediately the flimsiness of this: why not from three to ten years?

6. This is something we hadn't known, something the newspaper *Izvestiya* told us in July, 1957.

consider that capital punishment never did depart from Beria's cellars.) And the decree stated that the death sentence could be imposed on *subversives*—diversionists. What did that mean? It didn't say. Iosif Vissarionovich loved it that way: not to say all of it, just to hint. Did it refer only to someone who blew up rails with TNT? It didn't say. We had long since come to know what a "diversionist" was: someone who produced goods of poor quality was a diversionist. But what was a *subversive?* Was someone *subverting* the authority of the government, for example, in a conversation on a streetcar? Or if a girl married a foreigner—wasn't she *subverting* the majesty of our Motherland?

But it is not the judge who judges. The judge only takes his pay. The directives did the judging. The directive of 1937: ten years; twenty years; execution by shooting. The directive of 1943: twenty years at hard labor; hanging. The directive of 1945: ten years for everyone, plus five of disenfranchisement[7] (manpower for three Five-Year Plans). The directive of 1949: everyone gets twenty-five.[8]

The machine stamped out the sentences. The prisoner had already been deprived of all rights when they cut off his buttons on the threshold of State Security, and he couldn't avoid a stretch. The members of the legal profession were so used to this that they fell on their faces in 1958 and caused a big scandal. The text of the projected new "Fundamental Principles of Criminal Prosecution of the U.S.S.R." was published in the newspapers, and they'd *forgotten* to include any reference to *possible* grounds for acquittal. The government newspaper issued a mild rebuke: "*The impression might be created* that our courts only bring in convictions."[9]

But just take the jurists' side for a moment: why, in fact, should a trial be supposed to have *two* possible outcomes when our general *elections* are conducted on the basis of *one* candidate? An acquittal is, in fact, unthinkable from the economic point of view! It would mean that the informers, the Security officers, the inter-

7. Babayev, in fact a nonpolitical, shouted at them: "You can '*muzzle*' me for three hundred years! But I'll never lift my hand for you, you benefactors!"

8. Thus it was that a real spy (Schultz, in Berlin, in 1948) could get ten years, and someone who had never been a spy, Günther Waschkau, got twenty-five. Because he was in the wave of 1949.

9. *Izvestiya,* September 10, 1958.

rogators, the prosecutor's staff, the internal guard in the prison, and the convoy had all worked to no purpose.

Here is one straightforward and typical case that was brought before a military tribunal. In 1941, the Security operations branch of our inactive army stationed in Mongolia was called on to show its activity and vigilance. The military medical assistant Lozovsky, who was jealous of Lieutenant Pavel Chulpenyev because of some woman, realized this. He addressed three questions to Chulpenyev when they were alone: 1. "Why, in your opinion, are we retreating from the Germans?" (Chulpenyev's reply: "They have more equipment and they were mobilized earlier." Lozovsky's counter: "No, it's a *maneuver*. We're *decoying* them.") 2. "Do you believe the Allies will help?" (Chulpenyev: "I believe they'll help, but not from unselfish motives." Lozovsky's counter: "They are deceiving us. They won't help us at all.") 3. "Why was Voroshilov sent to command the Northwest Front?"

Chulpenyev answered and forgot about them. And Lozovsky wrote a denunciation. Chulpenyev was summoned before the Political Branch of the division and expelled from the Komsomol: for a defeatist attitude, for praising German equipment, for belittling the strategy of our High Command. The loudest voice raised against him belonged to the Komsomol organizer Kalyagin, who had behaved like a coward at the battle of Khalkhin-Gol, in Chulpenyev's presence, and therefore found it convenient to get rid of the witness once and for all.

Chulpenyev's arrest followed. He had one confrontation with Lozovsky. Their previous conversation *was not even brought up* by the interrogator. One question was asked: "Do you know this man?" "Yes." "Witness, you may leave." (The interrogator was afraid the charge might fall through.)[10]

Depressed by his month's incarceration in the sort of hole in the ground we have already described, Chulpenyev appeared before a military tribunal of the 36th Motorized Division. Present were Lebedev, the Divisional Political Commissar, and Slesarev, the Chief of the Political Branch. The witness Lozovsky was not even

10. Today Lozovsky holds the degree of candidate in medical sciences and lives in Moscow. Everything is going well with him. Chulpenyev drives a trolley bus.

summoned to testify. However, after the trial, to document the false testimony, they got Lozovsky's signature and that of Political Commissar Seryegin. The questions the tribunal asked were: Did you have a conversation with Lozovsky? What did he ask you about? What were your answers? Naïvely, Chulpenyev told them. He still couldn't understand what he was guilty of. "After all, many people talk like that!" he innocently exclaimed. The tribunal was interested: "Who? Give us their names." But Chulpenyev was not of their breed! He had the last word. "I beg the court to give me an assignment that will mean my death so as to assure itself once more of my patriotism"—and, like a simplehearted warrior of old—"Me and the person who slandered me—both of us together."

Oh, no! Our job is to kill off all those chivalrous sentiments in the people. Lozovsky's duty was to hand out pills and Seryegin's duty was to indoctrinate the soldiers.[11] Whether or not you died wasn't important. What was important was that *we* were on guard. The members of the military tribunal went out, had a smoke and returned: ten years plus three years' disenfranchisement.

There were certainly more than ten such cases in every division during the war. (Otherwise, the military tribunals would not have justified the cost of maintaining them.) And how many divisions were there in all? Let the reader count them up himself.

The sessions of the military tribunals were depressingly like one another. The judges were depressingly faceless and emotionless —rubber stamps. The sentences all came off the same assembly line.

Everyone maintained a serious mien, but everyone understood it was a farce, above all the boys of the convoy, who were the simplest sort of fellows. At the Novosibirsk Transit Prison in 1945 they greeted the prisoners with a roll call based on *cases*. "So and so! Article 58-1a, twenty-five years." The chief of the convoy guard was curious: "What did you get it for?" "For nothing at all." "You're lying. *The sentence for nothing at all is ten years.*"

When the military tribunals were under pressure, their "sessions" lasted one minute—the time it took them to go out and come in again. When their working day went on for sixteen con-

11. Viktor Andreyevich Seryegin lives in Moscow today and works in a Consumer Service Combine attached to the Moscow Soviet. He lives well.

secutive hours, one could see, through the door of the conference room, bowls of fruit on a table set with a white tablecloth. If they weren't in a hurry, they enjoyed delivering their sentence "with a psychological twist": ". . . sentenced to the supreme measure of punishment!" And then a pause. The judges would look the condemned man in the eye. It was interesting to see how he took it. What was he feeling at that moment? Only then would the verdict continue: ". . . but taking into consideration the sincere repentance . . ."

On the walls of the waiting room messages had been scratched with nails and scrawled in pencil: "I got execution," "I got twenty-five," "I got a 'tenner!' " They didn't clean off these graffiti; they served an educational purpose. Be scared; bow down; don't think that you can change anything by your behavior. Even if you were to speak in your own defense with the eloquence of Demosthenes, in a hall empty except for a handful of interrogators—like Olga Sliozberg in 1936, at the Supreme Court—it would not help you in the slightest. All you could do would be to increase your sentence from ten years to execution. For instance, if you were to shout: *"You are fascists!* I am ashamed to have been a member of your Party for several years!" (Nikolai Semyonovich Daskal did it in 1937, at the Special Collegium of the Azov–Black Sea Province at Maikop, presided over by Kholik.) In that situation what they did was fabricate a new *case* and do you in once and for all.

Chavdarov has described an incident in which the accused suddenly repudiated at their trial all the false testimony they had given during the interrogation. And what happened? If there was any hesitation while glances were exchanged, it lasted no more than a few seconds. The prosecutor asked for a recess, without explaining why. The interrogators and their tough-boy helpers dashed in from the interrogation prison. All the prisoners, distributed among separate boxes, were given a good beating all over again and promised another after the next recess. The recess came to an end. Once again the judges questioned all of them—and this time they all confessed.

Aleksandr Grigoryevich Karetnikov, the Director of the Textile Research Institute, provided an example of outstanding astuteness. Just before the session of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court was to begin, he sent word through the guard

that he wanted to give *supplementary* testimony. This, of course, provoked curiosity. He was received by the prosecutor. Karetnikov displayed his infected collarbone, broken by the interrogator who had struck him with a stool, and declared: "I signed everything under torture." By this time the prosecutor was cursing himself for having been so greedy to get "supplementary" testimony, but it was too late. Each of them is fearless only as long as he is an anonymous cog in the whole machine. But just as soon as the responsibility has become personalized, individualized, concentrated on him, just as soon as the searchlight is on him, he grows pale and realizes that he is nothing and can slip on any chance banana peel. So Karetnikov caught the prosecutor, and the latter was unwilling to suppress the whole business. The session of the Military Collegium began and Karetnikov repeated his statement in front of them. Now there was a case in which the Military Collegium went out and really conferred! But the only verdict they could have brought in was acquittal, which would have meant releasing Karetnikov on the spot. Therefore *they brought in no verdict at all!*

As if nothing at all had happened, they took Karetnikov back to prison, treated his collarbone, and kept him another three months. A very polite new interrogator entered the case, who wrote out a new warrant for Karetnikov's arrest. (If the Collegium had not twisted things, he might at least have spent those three months as a free man.) The interrogator asked the same questions as the first interrogator. Karetnikov, sensing freedom in the offing, conducted himself staunchly and refused to admit any guilt whatever. And what happened next? He got eight years from an OSO.

This example shows well enough the possibilities available to the prisoner and the possibilities available to the OSO. It was the poet Derzhavin who wrote:

> A partial court is worse than banditry.
> Judges are enemies; there sleeps the law.
> In front of you the citizen's neck
> Lies stretched out, quiet and without defense.

But it was a rare thing for such accidents to take place in the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court. For that matter, it was in general rare for it to rub clear its clouded eyes and take

a look at any individual little tin soldier of a prisoner. In 1937, A.D.R., an electrical engineer, was taken up to the fourth floor, running upstairs with a convoy guard on either side of him. (In all probability, the elevator was working, but there were so many prisoners pouring in and out that the officials and employees would not have been able to use the elevator if the prisoners had been permitted to.) Meeting a convicted prisoner who had just left, they dashed into the court. The Military Collegium was in such a hurry they hadn't sat down yet, and all three members remained standing. Catching his breath with difficulty, for he had been weakened by his long interrogation, R. blurted out his full name. They muttered something, exchanged glances, and Ulrikh—the very same, no less—proclaimed: "Twenty years!" And they dragged R. out at a gallop and, at a gallop, dragged in the next prisoner.

It was all like a dream. In February, 1963, I, too, got to climb those stairs, but I was courteously accompanied by a colonel who was also a Communist Party organizer. And in that room with the circular colonnade, in which, they say, the Plenary Sessions of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R. meet—with an enormous horseshoelike table that had another round table inside it and seven antique chairs—seventy officials of the Military Collegium heard me out—that same Military Collegium which once sentenced Karetnikov, and R. and others and others, and so on and so forth. And I said to them: "What a remarkable day this is! Although I was first sentenced to camp and then to eternal exile, I never before saw a single judge face to face. And now I see all of you assembled here together!" (And they, rubbing their eyes open, for the first time saw a living zek.)

But it turned out that it had not been they! Yes. They said it had not been they. They assured me that *those others* were no longer present. Some had retired honorably on pensions. A few had been removed. (Ulrikh, the outstanding executioner of all, had been removed, it turned out, back in Stalin's time, in 1950, for, believe it or not, leniency.) Some of them—there were only a few of these—had even been tried under Khrushchev, and, in their role as defendants, *they* had threatened: "Today you are trying us. Tomorrow we will try you. Watch out!" But like all the starts made under Khrushchev, this effort, too, which had

been very active at first, was soon abandoned. He dropped it before it got far enough to produce an irreversible change; which meant that things were left where they had been.

On that occasion, several veterans of the bench, all speaking up at the same time, gave voice to their recollections, unwittingly providing me with material for this chapter. (Oh, if only they had undertaken to remember and to publish! But the years pass; another five have gone by; and it has not become any brighter or lighter.) They recalled how certain judges, at conferences of their judicial colleagues, *took pride* when they spoke from the rostrum of *having succeeded* in not applying Article 51 of the Criminal Code, which specifies those circumstances that extenuate guilt, and thus had *succeeded* in handing down sentences of twenty-five years instead of ten. And how the *courts* had been humiliatingly *subservient to the Organs.* A certain judge was trying a case. A Soviet citizen who had returned from the United States had made the slanderous statement that there were good automobile roads in America—and nothing else. That was all there was to the case. The judge ventured to send the case back for further investigation *for the purpose* of getting "genuine anti-Soviet materials"—in other words, so that the accused could be beaten and tortured. But his praiseworthy intention wasn't taken into account. The angry answer came back: "You mean you don't trust our Organs?" And, in the upshot, the judge was exiled to the post of secretary of a military tribunal on Sakhalin! (Under Khrushchev, reproof was not so severe; judges who "made mistakes" were sent—where do you think?—to work as *lawyers.*)[12] The prosecutor's office was just as subservient to the Organs. When, in 1942, Ryumin's flagrant abuses in the counterintelligence section of the Northern Fleet became known, the prosecutor's office did not dare interfere on its own, but only reported *respectfully* to Abakumov that his boys were acting up. Abakumov had good reason to consider the Organs the salt of the earth! (This was the occasion when he called in Ryumin and promoted him—to his own eventual undoing.)

There just wasn't enough time that February day, or they

12. *Izvestiya,* June 9, 1964. This throws an interesting light on views of legal defense! In 1918, V. I. Lenin demanded that judges who handed down sentences that were too lenient be excluded from the Party.

would have told me ten times as much as they did. But this, too, provides food for thought. If both the courts and the prosecutor's office were simply pawns of the Minister of State Security, then maybe there isn't any need for a separate chapter to describe them.

They vied with each other in telling me things, and I kept looking around me in astonishment. They were people! Real *people!* They were smiling! They were explaining that their intentions were of the best. Well, and what if things turn full circle and it is once again up to them to try me? Maybe even in that very hall—and they were showing me the main hall.

Well, so they will convict me.

Which comes first—the chicken or the egg? The people or the system?

For several centuries we had a proverb: "Don't fear the law, fear the judge."

But, in my opinion, the *law* has outstripped people, and people have lagged behind in cruelty. It is time to reverse the proverb: "Don't fear the judge, fear the *law*."

Abakumov's kind of law, of course.

They stepped onto the rostrum and talked about *Ivan Denisovich*. They said happily that the book had eased their consciences (that's what they said . . .). They admitted that the picture I painted was decidedly on the bright side, that *every one of them* knew of camps worse than that. (Ah, so they did know?) Of the seventy people seated around that horseshoe, several turned out to be knowledgeable in literature, even to be readers of *Novy Mir*. They were eager for reform. They spoke forcefully about our social ulcers, about our neglect of our rural areas.

And I sat there and thought: If the first tiny droplet of truth has exploded like a psychological bomb, what then will happen in our country when whole waterfalls of Truth burst forth?

And they will burst forth. It has to happen.

Chapter 8

■

The Law as a Child

We forget everything. What we remember is not what actually happened, not history, but merely that hackneyed dotted line they have chosen to drive into our memories by incessant hammering.

I do not know whether this is a trait common to all mankind, but it is certainly a trait of our people, And it is a vexing one. It may have its source in goodness, but it is vexing nonetheless. It makes us an easy prey for liars.

Therefore, if they demand that we forget even the public trials, we forget them. The proceedings were open and were reported in our newspapers, but they didn't drill a hole in our brains to make us remember—and so we've forgotten them. Only things repeated on the radio day after day drill holes in the brain. I am not even talking about young people, since they, of course, know nothing of all this, but about people who were alive at the time of those trials. Ask any middle-aged person to enumerate the highly publicized open trials. He will remember those of Bukharin and Zinoviev. And, knitting his brow, that of the Promparty too. And that's all. There were no other public trials.

Yet in actual fact they began right after the October Revolution. In 1918, quantities of them were taking place, in many different tribunals. They were taking place before there were either laws or codes, when the judges had to be guided solely by the requirements of the revolutionary workers' and peasants' power. At the same time, they were regarded as blazing their own trail of

bold legality. Their detailed history will someday be written by someone, and it's not for us even to attempt to include it in our present investigation.

However, we cannot do without a brief review. It is our duty, anyway, to probe some of the charred ruins which go all the way back to that gentle, misty, rose-colored dawn.

In those dynamic years, the sabers of war were not rusting in their scabbards, nor did the executioners' revolvers have time to grow cold in their holsters. Only later on did the custom develop of hiding executions in cellars under cover of night and of shooting the victims in the back of the head. In 1918, the famous Ryazan Chekist Stelmakh had those sentenced to death shot in the courtyard, during the day, so that prisoners awaiting execution could watch from the prison windows.

There was an official term current then: *extrajudicial reprisal* . . . not because there weren't any courts at the time, but because there was the Cheka.[1] Because it was more efficient. Certainly, there were courts, and they tried and convicted and executed people, but we need to remember that, parallel to them and independently of them, extrajudicial reprisal went on at the same time. How can one depict its scale? M. Latsis, in his popular review of the Cheka's activity,[2] gives us material for only a year and a half (1918 and half of 1919) and for only twenty provinces of Central Russia ("The figures presented here are *far from complete*,"[3] in part, perhaps, out of modesty): those shot by the Cheka (i.e., without trial, bypassing the courts) numbered 8,389 persons (eight thousand three hundred and eighty-nine);[4] counterrevolutionary organizations uncovered—412 (a fantastic figure, in view of our inadequate capacity for organization throughout our history and also the general isolation of individuals in those years and the general psychological depression); the total of those arrested—87,000[5] (and this figure smells of understatement).

1. This fledgling whose beak had not yet hardened was warmed and encouraged by Trotsky: "Terror is a powerful means of policy and one would have to be a hypocrite not to understand this." And Zinoviev rejoiced too, not yet foreseeing his own end: "The letters GPU, like the letters VChK, are the most popular in the world."
2. Latsis, *Dva Goda Borby na Vnutrennom Fronte.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

What comparison is available for purposes of evaluation? In 1907 a group of leftist leaders published a collection of essays entitled *Against Capital Punishment,*[6] in which are listed by name all those sentenced to death in Tsarist Russia from 1826 to 1906. The editors qualify their findings with the statement that there were some additional victims, whose names remain unknown, and that the list is incomplete. (However, it is certainly not so incomplete as Latsis' materials compiled during the Civil War.) The list totals 1,397—from which 233 persons have to be deducted because their death sentences were commuted, as do an additional 270, who were sentenced *in absentia* and never caught (for the most part Polish rebels who had fled to the West). That leaves 894, a figure covering eighty years, which is not even close to Latsis' total for only one and a half years, and not including all the provinces of Russia either. True, the editors of the collection cite another presumed statistic of 1,310 for those sentenced to death (although perhaps not executed) in 1906 alone, and a total of 3,419 for 1826 through 1906. But this, mind you, was right in the midst of the notorious Stolypin reaction, a period for which an additional figure is available: 950 executions over a period of six months.[7] (In fact, the Stolypin military field tribunals were in existence for six months all told.) It sounds awful, and yet it does not make much of an impression on our hardened nerves: even if we multiply by three this figure of 950 for six months, in order to compare it with the Latsis figure for eighteen months in the postrevolutionary period, we still come up with the fact that the terror after the Revolution was at least *three times more intense* than Stolypin's. And that was for just twenty provinces and *excluded courts and tribunals.*

And from November, 1917, on, the courts acted on their own. Despite all the difficulties at the time, *Guiding Principles of the Criminal Law of the R.S.F.S.R.* were issued for their use in 1919. (We have not read this work, could not obtain it, and know only that it included "imprisonment for an indefinite term"—in other words, pending a special order.)

The courts were of three kinds: the people's courts, the circuit courts, and the Revolutionary Tribunals—the *Revtribunals.*

6. M. N. Gernet (editor), *Protiv Smertnoi Kazni* (*Against Capital Punishment*), second edition, 1907, pp. 385–423.
7. The journal *Byloye,* No. 2/14, February, 1907.

The people's courts handled ordinary misdemeanors and nonpolitical criminal cases. They were not empowered to impose death sentences, and, laughable as it seems, the people's court could not, in fact, impose sentences exceeding *two* years. Up to July, 1918, the heritage of the Left SR's still endured in our judicial proceedings. Only by special intervention of the government and only individually were impermissibly lenient sentences raised to *twenty* years.[8] From July, 1918, on, the people's courts were given the right to hand down sentences of up to *five* years. And in 1922, when all threats of war had died down, the people's courts got the right to impose sentences of up to *ten* years and lost the right to sentence anyone to *less* than six months.

From the beginning, the circuit courts and the *Revtribunals* had the power to impose the death sentence, but they lost it for a brief period: the circuit courts in 1920, and the *Revtribunals* in 1921. There were many tiny ups and downs in this period which only a historian pursuing all the details of those years would be able to trace.

Perhaps that historian will seek out the documents and unroll for us the scroll of tribunal sentences and also the statistics. (Though probably not. Whatever time and events failed to destroy was destroyed by persons interested in having such material disappear.) We know only that the *Revtribunals* were not asleep. They were handing down sentences right and left. And we know, too, that every time a city was captured during the Civil War the event was marked not only by gunsmoke in the courtyards of the Cheka, but also by sleepless sessions of the tribunal. And you did not have to be a White officer, a senator, a landowner, a monk, a Cadet, an SR, or an Anarchist in order to get your bullet. Soft white uncallused hands alone were sufficient in those years. But one can also hazard the guess that in Izhevsk or Votkinsk, Yaroslavl or Murom, Kozlov or Tambov, the uprisings were very costly as well to those who had callused workers' hands. And if those scrolls—of both the *extrajudicial* executions and those by tribunal—are unrolled for us someday, the most surprising thing will be the number of ordinary peasants we find on them. Because there was no end to the number of peasant uprisings and revolts from 1918 to 1921, even though they did not

8. See Part III, Chapter 1.

adorn the colored pages of the official *History of the Civil War,* and even though no one photographed them, and no one filmed motion pictures of those furious crowds attacking machine guns with clubs, pitchforks, and axes and, later, lined up for execution with their arms tied behind their backs—*ten for one!* The revolt in Sapozhok is remembered only in Sapozhok; the one in Pitelino only in Pitelino. We learn from Latsis the number of peasant rebellions that were suppressed during that same year and a half in twenty provinces—344.[9] (From 1918 on, peasant revolts were already being called "kulak" revolts, for how could the *peasants* revolt against the workers' and peasants' power! But how then could one explain that in every instance it was not just three peasant huts that revolted but the whole village? Why did the masses of poor peasants not kill the insurgent "kulaks" with those same pitchforks and axes, instead of marching with them against the machine guns? Latsis claims: "The kulaks compelled the rest of the peasants to take part in these revolts by promises, slander, and threats."[10] But what could have been more laden with promises than the slogans of the Committees of the Poor? And what could have been more loaded with threats than the machine guns of the Special Purpose Detachments, the CHON?

And how many wholly random people, completely random, whose destruction inevitably accounts for half the casualties of every real, shooting revolution, were caught between those millstones?

Here is an eyewitness description of a session of the Ryazan *Revtribunal* which met in 1919 to hear the case of the Tolstoyan I. Ye——v.

With the proclamation of universal and compulsory conscription into the Red Army (just one year after the slogans: "Down with the war!"; "Stick your bayonets in the ground!"; "Go home!"), "54,697 deserters were caught and sent to the front" by September, 1919, in Ryazan Province alone.[11] (And how many others were shot on the spot as examples?) Ye——v was not a deserter at all but a man who simply and openly refused to enter military service because of his religious convictions. He was con-

9. Latsis, *op. cit.,* p .75
10. *Ibid.,* p. 70.
11. *Ibid.,* p. 74.

scripted by main force, but in the barracks he refused to take up arms or undergo training. The enraged Political Commissar of the unit turned him over to the Cheka, saying: "He does not recognize the Soviet government." There was an interrogation. Three Chekists sat behind the desk, each with a Naguan revolver in front of him. "We have seen heroes like you before. You'll be on your knees to us in a minute! Either agree to fight immediately, or we'll shoot you!" But Ye——v was firm. He couldn't fight. He was a believer in free Christianity. And his case was sent to the *Revtribunal.*

It was an open session, with a hundred spectators in the hall. There was a polite elderly defense lawyer. The learned "accuser" —the term "prosecutor" was forbidden until 1922—was Nikolsky, another old jurist. One of the members of the *Revtribunal*— a juror—tried to elicit the views of the accused. (How can you, a representative of the working people, share the opinions of the aristocrat Count Tolstoi?) But the presiding judge interrupted the questioning and refused to permit it to continue. There was a quarrel.

Juror: "You do not want to kill people, and you try to persuade others to refrain from killing. But the Whites began the war, and you are preventing us from defending ourselves. We will send you to Kolchak, and you can preach your nonresistance there!"

Ye——v: "I will go wherever you send me."

Accuser: "This tribunal is not supposed to concern itself with any nondescript criminal actions but only with those which are counterrevolutionary. In view of the nature of this crime, I demand that the case be turned over to a people's court."

Presiding Judge: "Ha! Actions! What a pettifogger you are! We are guided not by the laws but by our revolutionary conscience!"

Accuser: "I insist that you include my demand in the record."

Defense Attorney: "I support the accuser. The case should be heard in an ordinary court."

Presiding Judge: "There's an old fool for you! Where did they manage to find him?"

Defense Attorney: "I have been a practicing lawyer for forty years and this is the first time I have heard such an insult. Enter it in the record."

Presiding Judge (laughing): "We'll enter it, we'll enter it!" Laughter in the hall. The court exits in order to confer. The sounds of a noisy argument come from the conference room. They return with the sentence: *to be shot.*

Loud indignation in the hall.

Accuser: "I protest against the sentence and will complain to the Commissariat of Justice!"

Defense Lawyer: "I join my voice to that of the accuser."

Presiding Judge: "Clear the hall!"

The convoy came and led Ye——v to jail, saying to him: "If everyone was like you, brother, how good it would be! There would be no war, and no Whites and no Reds!" They went back to their barracks and called a Red Army meeting. It condemned the sentence and sent a protest to Moscow.

In daily expectation of death, Ye——v waited for thirty-seven days, while, from the prison window, he watched executions taking place. They commuted his sentence to fifteen years of *strict detention.*

This is an instructive example. Although "revolutionary legality" won a partial victory, how enormous an effort it required on the part of the presiding judge! How much disorganization, lack of discipline, lack of political consciousness there still was! The prosecution stood firmly with the defense. The convoy guards stuck their noses into something that wasn't their business in order to send off a protest. Whew, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the new kind of court were not having things easy by any means! Of course, not all the sessions were anything like so turbulent, but this wasn't the only one of its kind. How many years it would take to reveal, direct, and confirm the necessary line, until the defense would stand as one with the prosecution and the court, and the accused would be in agreement with them too, and all the resolutions of the workers as well!

To pursue this enterprise of many years' duration is the rewarding task of the historian. As for us—how are we to make our way through that rosy mist? Whom are we to ask about it? Those who were shot aren't talking, and neither are those who have been scattered to the four winds. Even if the defendants, and the lawyers, and the guards, and the spectators have survived, no one will allow us to seek them out.

Evidently, the only help we will get is from the *prosecution.*

In this connection, I was given by well-wishers an intact copy of a collection of speeches for the prosecution delivered by that fierce revolutionary, the first People's Commissar of Military Affairs in the Workers' and Peasants' Government, the Commander in Chief, and later the organizer of the Department of Exceptional Courts of the People's Commissariat of Justice—where the personal rank of tribune was being readied for him, until Lenin vetoed the title[12]—the glorious accuser in the greatest trials, subsequently exposed as the ferocious enemy of the people, N. V. Krylenko.[13] And if, despite everything, we want to attempt a brief review of the public trials, if we are determined to try to get a feeling for the judicial atmosphere of the first post-revolutionary years, then we have to learn to read this Krylenko text. We have no other. And using it as a basis, we must try to picture to ourselves everything that is missing from it and everything that happened in the provinces too.

Of course, we would prefer to see the stenographic record of those trials, to listen to the dramatic voices from beyond the grave of those first defendants and those first lawyers, speaking at a time when no one could have foreseen in what implacable sequence all of it would be swallowed up—together with those *Revtribunal* members as well.

However, as Krylenko has explained, *for a whole series of technical reasons* "it was inconvenient to publish the stenographic records"[14] It was convenient only to publish his speeches for the prosecution and the sentences handed down by the tribunals, which by that time had already come to jibe completely with the demands of the accuser-prosecutor.

Krylenko claims that the archives of the Moscow Revtribunal and the Supreme Revtribunal turned out (by 1922) to be "far from orderly. . . . In a whole series of cases the stenographic records . . . were so incomprehensible that it was necessary either to cross out entire pages or else to try to restore the text from memory"! And a "series of the biggest trials"—including the trial which followed the revolt of the Left SR's, and the case of Ad-

12. Lenin, fifth edition, Vol. 36, p. 210.

13. Krylenko, *Za Pyat Let (1918–1922)*. Edition 7,000 copies. Prosecution speeches in the most important trials held before the Moscow and the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunals.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

miral Shchastny—"were conducted entirely without stenographic records."[15]

This is strange. The condemnation of the Left SR's was not a trivial matter. It was, after the February and October revolutions, the third turning point in our history, signaling the transition to a one-party system in the state. Not a few of them were shot. And no stenographic record was made.

And the "Military Plot" of 1919 was "liquidated by the Cheka in an extrajudicial reprisal,"[16] which "was further proof of its existence."[17] (In this case more than one thousand people were arrested altogether,[18] and, really, how could trials have been set up for them all?)

So just try to produce a neat, orderly report on the trials of those years!

Nevertheless we can learn the important principles involved in them. For example, the supreme accuser—in other words, the Prosecutor General—informs us that the All-Russian Central Executive Committee had the right to intervene in any judicial proceeding. "VTsIK pardons and *punishes,* at its own discretion *without any limitation whatever.*"[19] For example, a six-month sentence was changed to ten years. (And, as the reader understands, it was not necessary for the entire All-Russian Central Executive Committee to assemble at a plenary meeting to this end, since its Chairman, Sverdlov, for example, could correct a sentence without leaving his office.) All of this, Krylenko explains, "shows the superiority of our system over the false theory of the separation of powers,"[20] that is, the theory of the independence of the judiciary. (True, Sverdlov also said: "It is very good that the legislative and executive power are not divided by a thick wall as they are in the West. All problems *can be decided quickly*." Especially on the phone.)

Krylenko formulated even more frankly and precisely *the general tasks of the Soviet courts* in his speeches before those tribunals, when the court was "at one and the same time both

15. *Ibid.,* pp. 4–5.
16. *Ibid.,* p. 7.
17. *Ibid.,* p. 44.
18. Latsis, *op. cit.,* p. 46.
19. Krylenko, *op. cit.,* p. 13. (My italics.)
20. *Ibid.,* p. 14.

the creator of the law [Krylenko's italics] . . . *and a political weapon.*"[21] (My italics.)

Creator of the law because, for four years, there were no codes. They had thrown out the Tsarist codes, and they had not composed their own. "Don't tell me our criminal courts ought to act exclusively on the basis of existing written norms. We live in the process of Revolution."[22] "A tribunal is not the kind of court in which fine points of jurisprudence and clever stratagems are to be restored. . . . We are creating a new law and *new ethical norms.*"[23] And also: "No matter how much is said here about the eternal law of truth, justice, etc., we know . . . how dearly these have cost us."[24]

(But if *your* prison terms are compared with *ours*, maybe it didn't cost you so dearly after all? Maybe eternal justice was somewhat more comfortable?)

The reason that fine points of jurisprudence are unnecessary is that there is no need to clarify whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty: the concept of *guilt* is an old bourgeois concept which has now been uprooted.[25]

And so we heard from Comrade Krylenko that a tribunal was *not that kind of court!* On another occasion we would hear from him that a tribunal was *not a court at all:* "A tribunal is an organ of the class struggle of the workers directed against their enemies" and must act "from the point of view of the interests of the revolution . . . having in mind *the most desirable results* for the masses of workers and peasants."[26] People are not people, but "carriers of specific ideas."[27] "No matter what the individual qualities [of the defendant], *only one* method of evaluating him is to be applied: evaluation from the point of view of *class expediency.*"[28]

In other words, you can exist only if it's expedient for the working class. And if "this expediency should require that the avenging sword should fall on the head of the defendants, then

21. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 408.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 22. (My italics.)
24. *Ibid.*, p. 505.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 318.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 73. (The italics throughout are mine.)
27. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

no . . . verbal arguments can help."[29] (Such as arguments by lawyers, etc.) "In our revolutionary court we are guided not by articles of the law and not by the degree of extenuating circumstances; in the tribunal we must proceed on the basis of considerations of expediency."[30]

That was the way it was in those years: people lived and breathed and then suddenly found out that their existence was *inexpedient.*

And it must also be kept in mind that it was not what he had done that constituted the defendant's burden, but what he *might* do if he were not shot now. "We protect ourselves not only against the past but also against the future."[31]

Comrade Krylenko's pronouncements are clear and all-inclusive. They bring alive for us that whole period of the law in sharp relief. The clarity of autumn suddenly pierces the mists of spring and reaches us. And is it perhaps unnecessary to go further? Perhaps we aren't required to page through trial after trial. These pronouncements will be henceforth inexorably applied.

Close your eyes tight for a minute and picture a tiny courtroom—not yet gilded. Earnest members of the tribunal in simple field jackets, lean, not yet fat-faced. The *accusing power*—as Krylenko loved to style himself—wears an unbuttoned civilian jacket, with a glimpse of a sailor's striped undershirt just visible at the open throat.

The supreme accuser expresses himself in this sort of language: "The question of fact is interesting to me!"; "Define concretely the aspect of the tendency!"; "We are operating on the plane of analysis of objective truth." Sometimes, as you read, a quotation from the Latin shines out. (It is true that the same quotation turns up in case after case, but, after several years, a different one does appear.) And no wonder—he did, after all, complete the course in two faculties despite all his revolutionary running around. What attracts one to him are his frank opinions about the defendants: "Professional scoundrels!" And he isn't hypocritical in the least. If he didn't like the defendant's smile, he didn't hesitate to blurt out a threat, even before any sentence was imposed.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 524.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

"And as for you and your smile, Citizeness Ivanova, we'll make you pay for it, and we'll find a way to fix it so that you *never laugh again!*"[32]

So, shall we begin?

A. The Case of "Russkiye Vedomosti"

In this case, one of the earliest, *free speech* was on trial. On March 24, 1918, this famous "professorial" newspaper published an article by Savinkov entitled "En Route." They would have much preferred to arrest Savinkov himself, but he really was *en route,* damn it, and where was he to be found? So instead they closed down the paper and brought the elderly editor, P. V. Yegorov, to court as a defendant, insisting that he explain how he had dared to publish the article. After all, the New Era was four months old, and it was time to get used to it!

Yegorov naïvely defended himself by saying that the article had been written by a "leading political figure whose opinion was of general interest whether or not the editors shared it." Furthermore, he saw nothing slanderous in Savinkov's having said: "Let us not forget that Lenin, Natanson, and Co. arrived in Russia via Berlin; i.e., that the German authorities helped them return to the homeland"—because that in actual fact was what had happened; Kaiser Wilhelm's embattled Germany had helped Comrade Lenin to return.

Krylenko retorted that he would not conduct a prosecution for slander (why not?), and that the newspaper was on trial *for attempting to influence people's minds!* (And how could any newspaper dare have such a purpose!?)

The formal charge did not include Savinkov's phrase: "One has to be criminally insane to affirm seriously that the international proletariat *will come to our aid*"—because it still would come to our aid.

For attempting to influence people's minds, the newspaper, which had been published since 1864 and had survived the most fiercely reactionary periods—those of Loris-Melikov, Pobedonostsev, Stolypin, Kasso, and all the rest—was ordered *closed down forever!* And Yegorov, the editor—and this is a shameful

32. *Ibid.,* p. 296.

thing to have to say—was given only three months of solitary—just as though we were in Greece or some such place. (It is not so shamefully lenient, however, if one stops to think that it was only 1918! And if the old man managed to survive, he would be imprisoned again, and many more times too!)

It may seem strange to us now, but it is a fact that in those thunderous years bribes were given and taken just as tenderly as they had been from time immemorial in Old Russia and as they will be in the Soviet Union from here to eternity. Bribery was particularly rife in the judicial organs. And, though we blush to say it, in the Cheka. The official histories in their red, gold-stamped bindings are silent about this, but the old folks and eye-witnesses remember that the fate of political prisoners in the first years of the Revolution, as distinct from Stalinist times, often depended on bribes: they were accepted uninhibitedly, and prisoners were honestly released as a result. Although Krylenko picked out only a dozen *cases* for the five-year period his book covers, he reports two cases of bribery. Alas, even the Moscow Tribunal and the Supreme Tribunal squeezed their way through to perfection along a crooked path, muddied themselves in improprieties.

B. The Case of the Three Interrogators of the Moscow Revtribunal—April, 1918

In March, 1918, a speculator in gold bars named Beridze was arrested. His wife tried to find a way to ransom her husband, which was the accepted thing to do. Through a series of connections she succeeded in getting to one of the interrogators, who brought two others in with him. Meeting secretly, they demanded a bribe of 250,000 rubles, but, after some bargaining, they reduced it to 60,000, half in advance. The deal was to be made through the lawyer Grin. Everything would have gone off without a fuss, as hundreds of similar deals had, and the case would have gotten into neither Krylenko's chronicle nor ours, nor even become a matter of concern to the Council of People's Commissars, had it not been that Beridze's wife began to get miserly, and brought Grin only 15,000 as an advance payment, instead of

30,000. But the main thing was that, in consequence of female fickleness, she changed her mind overnight, decided her lawyer wasn't good enough for her, and went off the next morning to find another, the attorney Yakulov. It is not stated anywhere, but it was evidently Yakulov who decided to turn in the interrogators.

It is of interest that all the witnesses in this trial, beginning with the unfortunate wife, tried to give testimony helpful to the accused and to befuddle the prosecution. (Which would have been impossible in a political trial!) Krylenko explained their conduct as the result of a narrow-minded, philistine attitude, because they felt like outsiders as far as the *Revtribunal* was concerned. (And might we ourselves be so audacious as to advance the philistine hypothesis that in the course of a year and a half the witnesses had already learned *to be afraid of* the dictatorship of the proletariat? After all, it took a lot of nerve to turn in the interrogators of the *Revtribunal.* What would happen to you after that?)

The accuser's line of argument is also of interest. After all, just a month earlier the defendants had been his associates, his comrades in arms, his assistants. They were people who had been inalienably dedicated to the interests of the Revolution, and one of them, Leist, was even "a stern accuser, capable of hurling thunder and lightning at anyone who attacked the foundations." What was he to say about them now? Where was he to look for the causes of their fall? (A bribe was not enough in itself.) And, of course, it is clear where he looked: in their *pasts,* in their biographies!

Declared Krylenko: "If we look closely" at this Leist, "we will find highly interesting information." This is intriguing. Was he an inveterate adventurer? No, but he was the son of a professor at Moscow University! And not an ordinary professor, but one who had survived twenty years of reaction by his indifference to political activity! (And who, notwithstanding that reaction, had been accepted by Krylenko as a consultant.) Was it surprising, then, that the son turned out to be a double-dealer?

As for Podgaisky, he was the son of an official in the law courts . . . beyond doubt one of the reactionary, pogrom-organizing Black Hundreds; otherwise how could he have served the Tsar for twenty years? And the son, too, had prepared for a career in

the law courts, but then the Revolution had come—and he had wormed his way into the *Revtribunal.* Just yesterday all this had been depicted in a very favorable light, but it had suddenly become repulsive!

More repulsive than them both was, of course, Gugel. He had been a publisher. And what intellectual food had he been offering the workers and peasants? He was "nourishing the broad masses with low-quality literature," not Marx but, instead, books by bourgeois professors with world-famous names. (And we shall soon encounter these professors as defendants too.)

Krylenko is enraged and marvels at the kind of people who have sneaked into the tribunal. (Neither do we understand: What kind of people are the workers' and peasants' tribunals composed of? Why had the proletariat entrusted the task of striking down their enemies to people of this particular kind?)

And as for Grin, the lawyer, a man with an "in" on the investigating commission, who was quite able to get anybody off scot-free, he was a typical representative of that subspecies of the human race which Marx called *"leeches* on the capitalist structure"—a category including, in addition, all lawyers, gendarmes, priests, and also . . . notaries.[33]

It appears that Krylenko spared no effort in demanding mercilessly severe sentences, without reference to "the individual shadings of guilt." But some kind of lethargy, some sort of torpor, overcame the eternally vigorous tribunal, and it just barely managed to mumble six months in jail for the interrogators, and a fine for the lawyer. And only by availing himself of the authority of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee "to punish without limitation," did Krylenko, there in the Metropole, continue to hang ten-year sentences on the interrogators and five on the lawyer, plus full confiscation of his property. Krylenko thundered on about vigilance, and he almost managed, but not quite, to get the title of *Tribune* he so coveted.

We recognize that among the revolutionary masses at the time, as among our readers today, this unfortunate trial could not but undermine faith in the sanctity of the tribunal. And we therefore proceed with even greater timidity to the next case, which concerned an even loftier institution.

33. *Ibid.,* p. 500.

C. The Case of Kosyrev—February 15, 1919

F. M. Kosyrev and his pals Libert, Rottenberg, and Solovyev had first served on the Commission for Supply of the Eastern Front (back before Kolchak, when the enemy forces were the armies of the Constituent Assembly). It was discovered that there they had found ways to siphon into their own pockets from seventy thousand to a million rubles at a time; they rode around on fine horses and engaged in orgies with the nurses. Their Commission had acquired a house and an automobile, and their majordomo lived it up in the Yar Restaurant. (We aren't accustomed to picturing 1918 in this light, but all this was in the testimony of the Revtribunal.)

But none of this, to be sure, was the *case* against them. No charge had been brought against any of them in connection with their activities on the Eastern Front; they had even been forgiven all that. But wonder of wonders! Hardly had their Commission for Supply been disbanded than all four of them, with the addition of Nazarenko, a former Siberian tramp and convict pal of Kosyrev in criminal hard labor, were invited to constitute . . . the Control and Auditing Collegium of the VChK—the Cheka!

Here's what this Collegium was: *it had plenipotentiary powers to verify the legality of the actions of all the remaining organs of the Cheka,* the right to demand and review any case at any stage of its processing, and to reverse the decisions of all the remaining organs of the VChK, excepting only the Presidium of the Cheka!"[34] This was no small thing. This Collegium was second-in-command in the Cheka after the Presidium itself—it ranked immediately below Dzerzhinsky-Uritsky-Peters-Latsis-Menzhinsky-Yagoda!

The way of life of this comradely group remained just what it had been before. They didn't get swelled heads; they didn't get carried away. With certain individuals named Maximych, Lenka, Rafailsky, and Mariupolsky, "who had no connection at all with the Communist Party," they set up—in private apartments and in the Hotel Savoy—"lavish establishments where card games with table stakes as high as a thousand rubles a throw were the order of the day, along with heavy drinking and women." Kosyrev acquired a rich establishment of his own (costing 70,000 rubles)

34. *Ibid.*, p. 507.

and, in fact, did not even draw the line at hauling off silver spoons and goblets, and even ordinary glassware, from the Cheka. (And how did all these objects get to the Cheka?) "And this was where his attention was concentrated, rather than in the direction of ideas and ideology, and this was what he took from the revolutionary movement." (In the very act of repudiating the bribes he had accepted, this leading Chekist, without blinking, volunteered the lie that he possessed 200,000 rubles from an inheritance in a Chicago bank! Evidently, as far as he was concerned, there was no conflict between such a circumstance and world revolution!)

Now how did he propose to make proper use of his superhuman right to arrest anyone at all and release anyone at all? Clearly, one had to find a fish with golden roe—and in 1918 there were not a few such fish in the nets. (After all, the Revolution had been carried out too quickly; they hadn't found everything—how many precious stones, necklaces, bracelets, rings, and earrings the bourgeois ladies had managed to hide away!) Then one had to make contact with the relatives of those who had been arrested through some reliable middleman.

Such characters also pass before us at the trial. There was Uspenskaya, a woman of twenty-two. She had graduated from the St. Petersburg Gymnasium, but hadn't gone on to the university—the Soviets had come to power—and so, in the spring of 1918, Uspenskaya appeared at the Cheka to offer her services as an informer. She qualified on the basis of her appearance, and they accepted her.

Krylenko has this to say about informing, which in those days had a different label: "For *ourselves, we* see nothing shameful in it, we consider *this* to be our duty . . . the work itself is not disgraceful; once a person admits that this work is necessary in the interests of the Revolution, then he must do it."[35] But, alas, it turned out that Uspenskaya had no political credo! That's what was awful. She declared: "I agreed in order to be paid a fixed percentage" on the cases which were turned up, and, beyond that, "to split 50-50" with someone else . . . whom the court protected and instructed her not to identify. Krylenko put it in his own words: "Uspenskaya was not a staff member of the Cheka but worked at *piece rates.*"[36] And, incidentally, the accuser, under-

35. *Ibid.*, p. 513. (My italics.)
36. *Ibid.*, p. 507.

standing her in a very human way, explains that she had grown used to having plenty of money, and that her insignificant salary of 500 rubles from the Supreme Council of the Economy was nothing at all, considering that one exercise in extortion—for example, helping a merchant get the seal removed from his store—would net her 5,000 rubles, and another—from Meshcherskaya-Grevs, wife of a prisoner—would bring in 17,000. For that matter, Uspenskaya served only briefly as a mere stool pigeon. Thanks to the help of certain big Chekists, in a few months she became a member of the Communist Party and an interrogator.

However, we don't seem to be getting to the essence of the *case*. Uspenskaya had arranged a meeting between this Meshcherskaya-Grevs and a certain Godelyuk, a bosom pal of Kosyrev, in order to reach an agreement on her husband's ransom. (They had initially demanded 600,000 rubles!) But unfortunately, by some still unexplained means, the arrangements for that secret meeting became known to the same attorney, Yakulov, who had already done in the three bribe-taking interrogators and who, evidently, felt a class hatred for the whole proletarian system of judicial and extrajudicial processing. Yakulov denounced them to the Moscow Revtribunal,[37] and the presiding judge of the tribunal, recalling perhaps the wrath of the Council of People's Commissars in connection with the three interrogators, also blundered in terms of class premises. Instead of simply warning Comrade Dzerzhinsky and working it all out in the family, he hid a stenographer behind the curtain. And the stenographer took down all Godelyuk's references to Kosyrev, and to Solovyev and to other commissars, and all his stories about *who* in the Cheka *takes* how many thousands. Then, as per the stenographic record, Godelyuk received an advance payment of 12,000 rubles, and Meshcherskaya-Grevs was given a pass to enter the Cheka that had already been filled out by the Control and Auditing Collegium, by Libert and Rottenberg. (The bargaining was to continue there, inside the Cheka.) Then and there Godelyuk was caught! In his con-

37. In order to temper the reader's indignation against this leechlike snake, Yakulov, we should point out that by the time of Kosyrev's trial he had already been arrested and was in custody. They had found a *case* to take care of him. He was brought in to testify accompanied by convoy, and we are certainly entitled to hope that he was shot soon afterward. (Today we are surprised: How did things reach such a pitch of illegality? Why did no one mount an offensive against it?)

fusion, he gave testimony against them! (And Meshcherskaya-Grevs had already gotten to the Control and Auditing Collegium, and they had already ordered her husband's case transferred there *for verification.*)

But just a moment! After all, an exposé like this sullies the heavenly blue uniforms of the Cheka! Was the presiding judge of the Moscow Revtribunal in his right mind? Was he really tending to his own business?

But it turns out that that was the nature of the *moment*—a moment totally hidden from us in the folds of our majestic history! It seems that the Cheka's first year of work had produced a somewhat repellent impression even on the Party of the proletariat, which still hadn't gotten used to it. Only its first year had passed; the Cheka had taken only the first step on its glorious path; and already, as Krylenko writes, although not very clearly, a "dispute" had arisen "between the court and its functions and the extrajudicial functions of the Cheka . . . a dispute which, at the time, split the Party and the workers' districts into two camps."[38] And that is how the Kosyrev case could come up—whereas everything had gone smoothly before—and reach all the way up to the topmost level of the whole state apparatus.

The Cheka had to be saved! Help! Save the Cheka! Solovyev asked the tribunal to allow him inside the Taganka Prison to visit Godelyuk (who, alas, was not in the Lubyanka) so as *to chat* with him. The tribunal declined the request. Then Solovyev managed to *penetrate into Godelyuk's cell* without the help of any tribunal, and—what a coincidence!—at that very point Godelyuk became seriously ill. ("One can hardly speak of evil intentions on Solovyev's part," Krylenko bows and scrapes.) Feeling the approach of death, Godelyuk shakily repented having slandered the Cheka and asked for a sheet of paper on which to write his recantation: it was all untrue; he had slandered Kosyrev and the other commissars of the Cheka, and everything the stenographer had taken down behind the curtain was also untrue![39]

38. Krylenko, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

39. Oh, how many themes we have here! Oh, where is Shakespeare? Solovyev passes through the walls, flickering shadows in the cell, Godelyuk recants with failing hand. And all we hear about the years of the Revolution in our plays and our films is the street singing of "Hostile Whirlwinds."

"And who filled out the passes for Meshcherskaya-Grevs?" Krylenko insisted. They hadn't materialized out of thin air, certainly? No, the chief accuser "does not wish to say that Solovyev was an accessory in this case, because . . . because there is insufficient evidence," but he advances the hypothesis that "citizens still at liberty who were in danger of being caught with their hands in the till" might have sent Solovyev to the Taganka jail.

This was the perfect time to question Libert and Rottenberg, and they were subpoenaed, but they didn't appear! Just like that! They didn't show up. They declined to. All right, in that case question Meshcherskaya-Grevs! And—can you imagine it?—this broken-down aristocrat, too, was so brazen as not to appear before the Revtribunal! And there was no way to force her to! Godelyuk had recanted—and was dying. Kosyrev refused to admit anything! Solovyev was not guilty of anything! So there was no one to question.

What witnesses, on the other hand, did indeed appear before the tribunal, and of their own free will! The Deputy Chief of the Cheka, Comrade Peters. And even Feliks Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky himself. He arrived in a state of alarm. His long, burning zealot's face confronted the tribunal—whose members sat with sinking hearts—and he testified passionately in defense of the totally innocent Kosyrev and his high moral, revolutionary, and professional qualities. This testimony, alas, has not been preserved for us, but Krylenko refers to it this way: "Solovyev and Dzerzhinsky portrayed Kosyrev's wonderful qualites."[40] (Alas, you careless shavetail, you! In twenty years' time, in the Lubyanka, they are going to remind you of that trial!) It is easy to guess what Dzerzhinsky could have said: that Kosyrev was an iron Chekist, merciless to their enemies; that he was a good *comrade*. A hot heart, a cool head, clean hands.

And from the garbage heap of slander, the bronze knight Kosyrev rises before our eyes. Furthermore, his whole biography testifies to his remarkable will. Before the Revolution he was convicted several times—most often for murder. In the city of Kostroma, he was convicted of worming his way by deception into the house of an old woman named Smirnova and *strangling her with his own hands;* then of an attempt to kill his own father;

40. Krylenko, *op. cit.*, p. 522.

and then of killing a comrade in order to use his passport. The rest of Kosyrev's convictions were for swindling, and in all he spent many years at hard labor. (One could understand his desire for a luxurious life.) And he had only been freed by the Tsarist amnesties.

At that point, the stern and righteous voices of the major Chekists interrupted the chief accuser; they pointed out to him that those courts which had convicted Kosyrev were courts of the bourgeoisie and landowners and did not merit being noticed in our new society. But what happened? The shavetail, going overboard, poured forth from the chief accuser's rostrum a tirade so ideologically faulty that in our exposition of this harmonious series of cases tried by the tribunals, citing it is to strike a discordant note.

"If there was anything good in the old Tsarist court system, it was only trial by jury. . . . One could always have confidence in the jurors' decisions and a minimum of judicial error was to be found in them."[41]

It was all the more vexing to hear this sort of thing from Comrade Krylenko because just three months before, at the trial of the provocateur R. Malinovsky, a former favorite of the Communist Party leadership, who, notwithstanding his four criminal convictions in the past, had been co-opted into the Central Committee by the leadership and appointed to the Duma, the accusing power had taken an impeccable class stand.

"Every crime is the result of a given social system, and in these terms criminal convictions under the laws of a capitalist society and in Tsarist times do not, in our eyes, constitute a fact branding a person with an indelible mark once and for all. . . . We know of *many examples* of persons *in our ranks* branded by *such facts in the past*, but we have *never* drawn the conclusion that it was necessary to remove such a person from our milieu. *A person who knows our principles* cannot fear that the existence of previous criminal convictions in his record will jeopardize his being included in the ranks of the revolutionaries."[42]

That is how Comrade Krylenko could speak when in a Party

41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, p. 337.

vein. But in this other case, as a result of his mistaken judgment, the image of the knight in shining armor, Kosyrev, was being bespattered. And it created a situation in the tribunal wherein Comrade Dzerzhinsky was forced to say: "For just one second [Just one second!] the thought crossed my mind that citizen Kosyrev might be falling victim to the political passions which *in recent times have blazed up around the Extraordinary Commission.*"[43]

And Krylenko suddenly took thought: "I do not wish, and I never have wished, that the present trial should turn into a trial of the Cheka rather than a trial of Kosyrev and Uspenskaya. Not only am I *unable to desire* such an outcome: I am obliged to fight against it with all available means!" And he went on: "The most responsible, honest, and self-controlled comrades were put at the head of the Extraordinary Commission, and they took on themselves the difficult task of striking down the enemy, *even though this involved the risk of error.* . . . For this the Revolution is obliged to say thank you. . . . I underline this aspect so that . . . no one can ever say to me later: 'He turned out to be an instrument of political treason!' "[44] (But that's what they will say!)

What a razor edge the supreme accuser was walking! But he evidently had certain contacts, going back to his days in the underground, through which he learned how things were going to move on the morrow. This is conspicuous in several trials, and came out here too. At the beginning of 1919, there were certain trends toward saying: "*It is enough!* It is time to bridle the Cheka!" And this moment was "beautifully caught in Bukharin's essay, in which he said that *revolutionary legality* must give way to *legalized revolutionality.*"[45]

Wherever you look you see dialectics! And Krylenko burst out: "The Revtribunal is being called on to replace the Extraordinary Commission." (*To replace???*) Meanwhile, it "must be . . . no less fierce in implementing the system of terror, intimidation, and threat than was the Extraordinary Commission—the Cheka."[46]

Than it *was?* The past tense? Has he already buried it? Come

43. *Ibid.*, p. 509.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 505–510. (My italics.)
45. *Ibid.*, p. 511.
46. *Ibid.*

now, you are going to replace it, and where are the Chekists supposed to go? Ominous days! That was reason enough to hurry to the tribunal, in a greatcoat down to one's heels, to testify as a witness.

But perhaps your sources of information, Comrade Krylenko, are false?

Yes, the heavens darkened over the Lubyanka in those days. And this whole book might have been very different. But I suppose that what happened was that iron Feliks Dzerzhinsky went to see Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, and talked it over and explained. And the skies cleared. And although two days later, on February 17, 1919, the Cheka was deprived of its judicial rights by special decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee—it was "*not for long.*"[47]

Our day in court was further complicated by the fact that the objectionable Uspenskaya behaved abominably. From the defendants' bench she "threw mud at" leading Chekists who had not previously been touched by the trial, including Comrade Peters! (She turned out to have used his pure name in her blackmailing operations; she used to sit right in his office, without any ceremony, during his conversations with other intelligence agents.) Now she hinted at some dark prerevolutionary past of his in Riga. That's the kind of snake she had turned into in eight months, despite the fact that she had been with Chekists during those eight months! What was to be done with such a woman? Here Krylenko's position jibed completely with that of the Chekists: "Until a firm regime has been established, and we are a long way from that being the case [Are we really???] . . . in the interests of the defense of the Revolution . . . there is not and cannot be any sentence for citizeness Uspenskaya other than her *annihilation.*" He did not say "to be shot"—what he said was "annihilation"! But after all, Citizen Krylenko, she's just a young girl! Come on now, give her a "tenner," or maybe a "twenty-five," and maybe the system will be firmly established by then? How about it? But alas: "In the interests of society and of the Revolution there is no other answer, nor can there be one—and the question cannot be put any other way. *In the given case,* detention isn't going to bear any fruit!"

47. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

She had sure rubbed the salt in. . . . She knew too much. . . .

And Kosyrev had to be sacrificed too. They shot him. It was for the health of the others.

Can it really be that someday we will read the old Lubyanka archives? No, they will burn them. They already have.

As the reader can see for himself, this was a very unimportant case. We didn't have to dwell on it. But here is a different one.

D. The Case of the "Churchmen"—January 11–16, 1920

This case, in Krylenko's opinion, is going to have a "suitable place in the annals of the Russian Revolution." Right there in the annals, indeed! It took one day to wring Kosyrev's neck, but in this case they dragged things out for five whole days.

The principal defendants were: A. D. Samarin (a famous man in Russia, the former chief procurator of the Synod; a man who had tried to liberate the church from the Tsar's yoke, an enemy of Rasputin whom Rasputin had forced out of office);[48] Kuznetsov, Professor of Church Law at Moscow University; the Moscow archpriests Uspensky and Tsvetkov. (The accuser himself had this to say about Tsvetkov: "An important public figure, perhaps the best that the clergy could produce, a philanthropist.")

Their guilt lay in creating the "Moscow Council of United Parishes," which had in turn recruited, from among believers forty to eighty years old, a voluntary guard for the Patriarch (unarmed, of course), which had set up permanent day and night watches in his residence, who were charged with the responsibility, in the event of danger from the authorities to the Patriarch, of assembling the people by ringing the church alarm bells and by telephone, so that a whole crowd might follow wherever the Patriarch might be taken and *beg*—and there's your counter-revolution for you!—the Council of People's Commissars to release him!

What an ancient Russian—Holy Russian—scheme! To assemble the people by ringing the alarm bells . . . and proceed in a crowd with a petition!

48. But accuser Krylenko saw no difference whatever between Samarin and Rasputin.

And the accuser was astonished. What danger threatened the Patriarch? Why had plans been made to defend him?

Well, of course, it was really no more than the fact that the Cheka had for two years been conducting extrajudicial reprisals against undesirables, the fact that only a short while before four Red Army men in Kiev had killed the Metropolitan, the fact that the Patriarch's "case had already been worked up and completed, and all that remained was to bring it before the Revtribunal," and "it was only out of concern for the broad masses of workers and peasants, still under the influence of clerical propaganda, that we have left these, our class enemies, *alone for the time being*."[49] How could Orthodox believers possibly be alarmed on the Patriarch's account? During those two years Patriarch Tikhon had refused to keep silent. He had sent messages to the People's Commissars, to the clergy, and to his flock. His messages were not accepted by the printers but were copied on typewriters (the first samizdat). They exposed the annihilation of the innocents, the ruin of the country. How, therefore, could anyone really be concerned for the Patriarch's life?

A second charge was brought against the defendants. Throughout the country, a census and requisition of church property was taking place (this was in addition to the closing of monasteries and the expropriation of church lands and properties; in question here were liturgical vessels, cups, and candelabra). And the Council of Parishes had disseminated an appeal to believers to resist the requisition, sounding the alarm on the church bells. (And that was natural, after all! That, after all, was how they had defended the churches against the Tatars too!)

And the third charge against them was their incessant, impudent *dispatching of petitions* to the Council of People's Commissars for relief from the desecration of the churches by local authorities, from crude blasphemy and violations of the law which guaranteed freedom of conscience. Even though no action was taken on these petitions (according to the testimony of Bonch-Bruyevich, administrative officer of the Council of People's Commissars), they had discredited the local authorities.

Taking into consideration all the violations committed by these defendants, what punishment could the accuser possibly demand

49. Krylenko, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

for these awful crimes? Will not the reader's revolutionary conscience prompt the answer? *To be shot*, of course. And that is just what Krylenko did demand—for Samarin and Kuznetsov.

But while they were fussing around with these damned legal formalities, and listening to too many long speeches from too many bourgeois lawyers (speeches which "for technical reasons" we will not cite here), it turned out that capital punishment had been . . . abolished! What a fix! It just couldn't be! What had happened? It developed that Dzerzhinsky had issued this order to the Cheka (the Cheka, without capital punishment?). But had it been extended to the tribunals by the Council of People's Commissars? Not yet. Krylenko cheered up. And he continued to demand execution by shooting, on the following grounds:

"Even if we suppose that the consolidation of the Republic has removed the immediacy of threat from such persons, it seems nonetheless indubitable that in this period of creative effort . . . a purge . . . of the old turncoat leaders . . . is required by revolutionary necessity." And further: "Soviet power is proud of the decree of the Cheka abolishing the death penalty." But this "still does not force us to conclude that the question of the abolition of capital punishment has been decided once and for all . . . for the entire period of Soviet rule."[50]

That was quite prophetic! Capital punishment would return—and very soon too! After all, what a long line still remained to be rubbed out! (Yes, including Krylenko too, and many of his class brothers as well.)

And, indeed, the tribunal was submissive and sentenced Samarin and Kuznetsov to be shot, but they did manage to tack on a recommendation for clemency: to be imprisoned in a concentration camp *until the final victory over world imperialism!* (They would still be sitting there today!) And as for "the best that the clergy could produce"—his sentence was fifteen years, commuted to five.

Other defendants as well were dragged into this trial in order to add at least a little substance to the charges. Among them were some monks and teachers of Zvenigorod, involved in the Zvenigorod affair in the summer of 1918, but for some reason not brought to trial for a year and a half (or they might have been, but were now being tried again, since it was expedient).

50. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

That summer some Soviet officials had called on Father Superior Ion[51] at the Zvenigorod monastery and ordered him ("Step lively there!") to turn over to them the holy relics of St. Savva. The officials not only smoked inside the church and evidently behind the altar screen as well, and, of course, refused to take off their caps, but one of them took Savva's skull in his hands and began to spit into it, to demonstrate that its sanctity was an illusion. And there were further acts of desecration. This led to the alarm bell being sounded, a popular uprising, and the killing of one or two of the officials. (The others denied having committed any acts of desecration, including the spitting incident, and Krylenko accepted their denials.)[52] Were these officials the ones on trial now? No, the monks.

We beg the reader, throughout, to keep in mind: from 1918 on, our judicial custom determined that every Moscow trial, except, of course, the unjust trial of the Chekists, was by no means an isolated trial of an accidental concatenation of circumstances which had converged by accident; it was a landmark of judicial policy; it was a display-window model whose specifications determined what product was good for the provinces too; it was a *standard;* it was like that one-and-only model solution up front in the arithmetic book for the schoolchildren to follow for themselves.

Thus, when we say, "the trial of the churchmen," this must be understood in the multiple plural . . . "many trials." And, in fact, the supreme accuser himself willingly explains: "Such trials *have rolled along through almost all the tribunals of the Republic.*" (What language!) They had taken place not long before in the tribunals in North Dvina, Tver, and Ryazan; in Saratov, Kazan, Ufa, Solvychegodsk, and Tsarevokokshaisk, trials were held of the clergy, the choirs, and the active members of the congrega-

51. Firguf, a former guards officer of the Tsar's household cavalry, who had "suddenly undergone a spiritual conversion, given all his goods to the poor, and entered a monastery, but I do not in fact know whether he actually did distribute his goods to the poor." Yes, and if one admits the possibility of spiritual conversion, what then remains of class theory?

52. But which of us doesn't remember similar scenes? My first memory is of an event that took place when I was, probably, three or four: The *peaked-heads* (as they called the Chekists in their high-peaked Budenny caps) invaded a Kislovodsk church, sliced through the dumbstruck crowd of worshipers, and, in their pointed caps, went straight through the altar screen to the altar and stopped the service.

tion—representatives of the ungrateful "Orthodox church, *liberated* by the October Revolution."[53]

The reader will be aware of a conflict here: why did many of these trials occur earlier than the Moscow model? This is simply a shortcoming of our exposition. The judicial and the extrajudicial persecution of the liberated church had begun well back in 1918, and, judging by the Zvenigorod affair, it had already reached a peak of intensity by that summer. In October, 1918, Patriarch Tikhon had protested in a message to the Council of People's Commissars that there was no freedom to preach in the churches and that "many courageous priests have already paid for their preaching with the blood of martyrdom. . . . You have laid your hands on church property collected by generations of believers, and you have not hesitated to violate their posthumous intent." (The People's Commissars did not, of course, read the message, but the members of their administrative staff must have had a good laugh: Now they've really got something to reproach us with—posthumous intent! We sh-t on your ancestors! We are only interested in descendants.) "They are executing bishops, priests, monks, and nuns who are guilty of nothing, on the basis of indiscriminate charges of indefinite and vaguely counterrevolutionary offenses." True, with the approach of Denikin and Kolchak, this was stopped, so as to make it easier for Orthodox believers to defend the Revolution. But hardly had the Civil War begun to die down than they took up their cudgels against the church again, and the cases started *rolling through* the tribunals once more. In 1920 they struck at the Trinity-St. Sergius Monastery and went straight to the holy relics of that chauvinist Sergius of Radonezh, and hauled them off to a Moscow museum.[54]

53. Krylenko, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

54. The Patriarch cited Klyuchevsky: "The gates of the monastery of the Saint will shut and the ikon lamps will be extinguished over his sepulcher only when we shall have lost every vestige of that spiritual and moral strength willed to us by such great builders of the Russian land as Saint Sergius." Klyuchevsky did not imagine that the loss would occur almost in his own lifetime. The Patriarch asked for an appointment with the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, in the hope of persuading him not to touch the holy monastery and the relics . . . for after all the church was separate from the state! The answer came back that the Chairman was occupied in discussing important business, and that the appointment could not be arranged for the near future.

Nor for the distant future either.

The People's Commissariat of Justice issued a directive, dated August 25, 1920, for the liquidation of relics of all kinds, since they were a significant obstacle to the resplendent movement toward a new, just society.

Pursuing further Krylenko's own selection of cases, let us also examine the case tried in the *Verkhtrib*—in other words, the Supreme Tribunal. (How affectionately they abbreviated words within their intimate circle, but how they roared out for us little insects: "Rise! The *court* is in session!")

E. The Case of the "Tactical Center"—August 16–20, 1920

In this case there were twenty-eight defendants present, plus additional defendants who were being tried *in absentia* because they weren't around.

At the very beginning of his impassioned speech, in a voice not yet grown hoarse and in phrases illumined by class analysis, the supreme accuser informs us that in addition to the landowners and the capitalists "there existed and there continues to exist one additional social stratum, the social characteristics of which have *long since been under consideration* by the representatives of revolutionary socialism. [In other words: to be or not to be?] This stratum is the *so-called 'intelligentsia.'* In this trial, we shall be concerned with *the judgment of history on the activity of the Russian intelligentsia*"[55] and with the verdict of the Revolution on it.

The narrow limits of our investigation prevent our comprehending exactly the *particular manner* in which the representatives of revolutionary socialism were *taking under consideration* the fate of the so-called intelligentsia and what specifically they were planning for it. However, we take comfort in the fact that these materials have been published, that they are accessible to everyone, and that they can be assembled in any required detail. Therefore, solely to understand the over-all atmosphere of the Republic, we shall recall the opinion of the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars in the years when all these tribunal sessions were going on.

55. Krylenko, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

In a letter to Gorky on September 15, 1919—which we have already cited—Vladimir Ilyich Lenin replied to Gorky's attempts to intercede in the arrests of members of the intelligentsia, among them, evidently, some of the defendants in this trial, and, commenting on the bulk of the Russian intelligentsia of those years (the "close-to-the-Cadets intelligentsia"), he wrote: "In actual fact *they are not [the nation's] brains, but shit.*"[56] On another occasion he said to Gorky: "If we break too many pots, it will be its [the intelligentsia's] fault."[57] If the intelligentsia wants justice, why doesn't it come over to us? "I've gotten one bullet from the intelligentsia myself."[58] (In other words, from Kaplan.)

On the basis of these feelings, he expressed his mistrust and hostility toward the intelligentsia: rotten-liberal; "pious"; "the slovenliness so customary among 'educated' people";[59] he believed the intelligentsia was always shortsighted, that it had *betrayed the cause of the workers.* (But when had the intelligentsia ever sworn loyalty *to the cause of the workers,* the dictatorship of the workers?)

This mockery of the intelligentsia, this contempt for the intelligentsia, was subsequently adopted with enthusiasm by the publicists and the newspapers of the twenties and was absorbed into the current of day-to-day life. And in the end, the members of the intelligentsia accepted it too, cursing their eternal thoughtlessness, their eternal *duality,* their eternal *spinelessness,* and their hopeless *lagging behind the times.*

And this was just! The voice of the accusing power echoed and re-echoed beneath the vaults of the Verkhtrib, returning us to the defendants' bench.

"This social stratum . . . has, during recent years, undergone the trial of universal re-evaluation." Yes, yes, re-evaluation, as was so often said at the time. And how did that re-evaluation occur? Here's how: "The Russian intelligentsia which entered the crucible of the Revolution with slogans of power for the people [so, it had something to it after all!] emerged from it an ally of the black [not even White!] generals, and a hired [!] and obedient

56. Lenin, fifth edition, Vol. 51, p. 48.
57 *V. I. Lenin i A. M. Gorky* (*V. I. Lenin and A. M. Gorky*), Moscow, Academy of Sciences Publishing House, 1961, p. 263.
58. *Ibid.*
59. Lenin, fourth edition, Vol. 26, p. 373.

agent of European imperialism. The intelligentsia trampled on its own banners [as in the army, yes?] and covered them with mud."[60]

How, indeed, can we not cry out our hearts in repentance? How can we not lacerate our chests with our fingernails?

And the only reason why "*there is no need to deal out the death blow* to its individual representatives" is that "*this social group has outlived its time.*"[61]

Here, at the start of the twentieth century! What power of foresight! Oh, scientific revolutionaries! (However, the intelligentsia had to be *finished off* anyway. Throughout the twenties they kept finishing them off and finishing them off.)

We examine with hostility the twenty-eight individual allies of the black generals, the hirelings of European imperialism. And we are especially aroused by the stench of the word *Center*. Now we see a Tactical Center, now a National Center, and now a Right Center. (And in our recollection of the trials of two decades, Centers keep creeping in all the time, Centers and Centers, Engineers' Centers, Menshevik Centers, Trotskyite-Zinovievite Centers, Rightist-Bukharinite Centers, but all of them are crushed, all crushed, and that is the only reason you and I are still alive.) Wherever there is a *Center*, of course, the hand of imperialism can be found.

True, we feel a measure of relief when we learn that the Tactical Center on this occasion *was not an organization*; that it did not have: (1) statutes; (2) a program; (3) membership dues. So, what did it have? Here's what: *They used to meet!* (Goose-pimples up and down the back!) And when they met, *they undertook to familiarize themselves with one another's point of view!* (Icy chills!)

The charges were extremely serious and were supported by the evidence. There were two (2) pieces of evidence to corroborate the charges against twenty-eight accused individuals.[62] These were two letters from people who were not present in court because they were abroad: Myakotin and Fyodorov. They were absent, but until the October Revolution they had been members

60. Krylenko, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
62. *Ibid.*

of the same committees as those who were present, a circumstance that gave us the right to equate those who were absent with those who were present. And their letters dealt with their *disagreements* with Denikin on certain trivial questions: the peasant question (we are not told what these differences were, but they were evidently advising Denikin to give the land to the peasants); the Jewish question (they were evidently advising him not to return to the previous restrictions); the federated nationalities question (enough said: clear); the question of the structure of the government (democracy rather than dictatorship); and similar matters. And what conclusion did this evidence suggest? Very simple. It proved the fact of correspondence, and it also proved *the agreement, the unanimity, of those present with Denikin!* (Grrr! Grrrr!)

But there were also direct accusations against those present: that they had exchanged information with acquaintances who lived in outlying areas (Kiev, for example) which were not under the control of the central Soviet authorities! In other words, this used to be Russia, let's say, but then in the interests of world revolution we ceded this one piece to Germany. And people continued to exchange letters. How are you doing there, Ivan Ivanich? Here's how things are going with us. N. M. Kishkin, a member of the Central Committee of the Cadets, was so brazen as to try to justify himself right from the defendants' bench: "A man doesn't want to be blind. He tries to find out everything he can about what's going on everywhere."

To find out *everything* about what's going on *everywhere?* He doesn't want to be blind? Well, all one can say is that the accuser correctly described their actions as *treason, treason to Soviet power!*

But their most heinous acts were something else again. In the midst of the Civil War they wrote books, composed memoranda and projects. Yes, as experts in constitutional law, financial science, economic relationships, the system of justice, and education, they wrote *works!* (And, as one might easily guess, their works were not based on earlier works by Lenin, Trotsky, and Bukharin.) Professor Kotlyarevsky wrote on the federal structure of Russia; V. I. Stempkovsky on the agrarian question (no doubt, without collectivization); V. S. Muralevich on education in the future Russia; N. N. Vinogradsky on economics. And the

(great) biologist N. K. Koltsov (who never received anything from the Motherland except persecution and execution) allowed all those bourgeois big shots to get together in his institute for their discussions. (N. D. Kondratyev was included here also. In 1931 he was condemned once and for all in connection with TKP—the fictitious Working Peasants Party.)

Our accuser's heart jumps right out of our chest, outrunning the sentence. Well, what punishment was adequate for these assistants to the general? Just one, of course—*to be shot!* That was not merely what the accuser demanded—it was the *sentence* of the tribunal. (Alas, it was later commuted to concentration camp until the end of the Civil War.)

And indeed the defendants' guilt consisted in the fact that they hadn't sat in their own corners, sucking on their quarter-pound of bread; that "they had talked things over and reached agreements as to what the state structure should be after the fall of the Soviet regime."

In contemporary scientific language, this is known as the study of the alternative possibility.

The voice of the accuser thundered, but we hear some kind of crack in it. As if his eyes were searching the rostrum, looking for another piece of paper? A quotation, perhaps? Give it to him *on tiptoe, quick, quick!* Give him one at random! From some other trial? It's not important! Wasn't this the one, Nikolai Vasilyevich Krylenko?

"For us . . . the concept of *torture* inheres in the very fact of holding political prisoners in prison. . . ."

So that's it! It is torture to keep political prisoners in prison! And the accuser said so! What a generous view! A new jurisprudence is arising! And further:

". . . Struggle against the Tsarist government was second nature to them [the politicals] and *not to struggle* against Tsarism was something of which *they were incapable.*"[63]

What's that? They *were incapable* of not studying alternative possibilities? Perhaps *thinking* was first nature to the intellectual?

Alas, through stupidity, they had shoved the wrong quotation at him. Now wasn't that a mix-up for you! But Nikolai Vasilyevich was already off to the races.

"*And even if* the defendants here in Moscow did not lift a

63. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

finger [and it looks very much as though that's the way it was] at such a moment, nevertheless . . . even a conversation over a teacup as to the kind of system that should replace the Soviet system, which is allegedly about to fall, is a counterrevolutionary act. . . . During the Civil War not only is any kind of action [against Soviet power] a crime . . . but the *fact of inaction is also criminal.*"[64]

Well, now everything is comprehensible, everything is clear. They are being sentenced to death—for inaction. For a cup of tea.

The Petrograd intellectuals, for example, decided that in the event of Yudenich's taking the city, they would first of all "concern themselves with convening a democratic municipal Duma." (In other words, to safeguard the city against a possible dictatorship.)

Krylenko: "I would like to shout at them: 'It was your duty to think first of all *how you might die in battle,* so as not to allow Yudenich into the city!' "

But they didn't die in battle.

(Nor, in fact, did Nikolai Vasilyevich Krylenko.)

In addition, there were certain defendants *who knew about all this talk* and yet *kept silent,* did not write denunciations. (In our contemporary lingo: "He knew, but he didn't tell.")

And here is another real example not merely of inaction but of actively criminal action. Through L. N. Khrushcheva, a member of the Political Red Cross (and there she was, *on the defendants' bench*), some of the other defendants had raised money to *help the Butyrki prisoners.* (One can just picture that flood of capital—pouring into the prison commissary!) And they had supplied various articles too. (Yes, indeed. Just look. Woolens, too, perhaps?)

There were no bounds to their evil-doing! Nor would there be any limits to their proletarian punishment!

As when a cinema projector starts slowing down, twenty-eight prerevolutionary male and female faces flicker past us in a film that's fuzzy and askew. We didn't notice their expressions! Were they frightened? Contemptuous? Proud?

We don't have their answers! Their last words are missing—

64. *Ibid.*

because of "technical considerations." But, making up for this lack, the accuser croons to us: "From beginning to end, it was self-flagellation and repentance for the mistakes they committed. The political instability and the interim nature of the intelligentsia . . . [yes, yes, here comes another one: interim nature] completely justified that Marxist evaluation of the intelligentsia made by the Bolsheviks."[65]

I don't know. Perhaps they did engage in self-flagellation. Perhaps they didn't. Perhaps the passion to save one's life at any cost had *already* come into being. Perhaps the old dignity of the intelligentsia had *still* been maintained. . . . I don't know.

Who was that young woman flashing past?

That was Tolstoi's daughter, Alexandra. Krylenko asked her: "What did you do during these conversations?" And she answered: "I attended to the samovar." Three years of concentration camp!

And who was that man over there? His face was familiar. It was Savva Morozov. But listen here: after all, he gave the Bolsheviks all that money! And now he has handed a little to *these people?* Three years in prison, but released on probation. Let that be a lesson to him![66]

And that's how the sun of our freedom rose. It was as just such a well-nourished little imp that our Octobrist child—Law—began to grow.

Today we don't remember this at all.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
66. He would soon cut his own throat.

Chapter 9

■

The Law Becomes a Man

Our review has already grown. Yet we have in fact hardly begun. All the big and famous trials are still ahead of us. But their basic lines have already been indicated.

So let us stick with our Law while it is still in its boy scout stage.

Let us recall one long-forgotten case which was not even political.

F. The Case of Glavtop—May, 1921

This case was important because it involved *engineers*—or, as they had been christened in the terminology of the times, "specialists," or spetsy. (Glavtop was the Main Fuels Committee.)

Nineteen twenty-one was the most difficult of all the four winters of the Civil War; nothing was left for fuel, and trains simply couldn't get to the next station; and there were cold and famine in the capitals, and a wave of strikes in the factories—strikes which, incidentally, have been completely wiped out of our history books by now. Who was to blame? That was a famous question: *Who is to blame?*

Well, obviously, *not* the Over-All Leadership. And not even the local leadership. That was important. If the "comrades who were often brought in from outside"—i.e., the Communist leaders—did not have a correct grasp of the business at hand, then it was

the engineers, or spetsy, who were supposed to "outline for them the correct approach to the problem."[1] And this meant that "it was not the leaders who were to blame. . . . Those who had worked out the calculations were to blame, those who had refigured the calculations, those who had calculated the plan"—which consisted of how to produce food and heat with zeros. Those to blame weren't the ones who *compelled* but the ones who *calculated!* If the planning turned out to be inflated, the spetsy were the ones to blame. Because the figures did not jibe, "this was the fault of the spetsy, not of the Council of Labor and Defense" and "not even of the responsible men in charge of Glavtop—the Main Fuels Committee."[2]

If there was no coal, firewood, or petroleum, it was because the spetsy had "brought about a mixed-up, chaotic situation." And it was their own fault that they hadn't resisted the urgent telephonograms from Rykov and the government—and had issued and allotted fuels outside the scope of the plan.

The spetsy were to blame for everything. But the proletarian court was not merciless with them. Their sentences were lenient. Of course, an inner hostility to those cursed spetsy remains in proletarian hearts—but one can't get along without them; everything goes to rack and ruin. And the tribunal doesn't persecute them, and Krylenko even says that from 1920 on "there is no question of any sabotage." The spetsy are to blame, but not out of malice on their part; it's simply because they are inept; they aren't able to do any better; under capitalism, they hadn't learned to work, or else they were simply egotists and bribe-takers.

And so, at the beginning of the reconstruction period, a surprising tendency toward leniency could be observed in regard to the engineers.

The year 1922, the first year of peace, was rich in public trials, so rich that almost this entire chapter will be devoted to that year alone. (People are surprised: the war has ended, and yet there is an increase in court activity? But in 1945, too, and in 1948, the Dragon became very, very energetic. Is there not, perhaps, a simple sort of law in this?)

1. Krylenko, *Za Pyat Let,* p. 381.
2. *Ibid.,* pp. 382–383.

Although in December, 1921, the Ninth Congress of the Soviets decreed that *the authority of the Cheka be narrowed*[3] and, in consequence, its authority was indeed narrowed and it was renamed the GPU, as early as October, 1922, the powers of the GPU were broadened again, and in December Dzerzhinsky told a *Pravda* correspondent: "Now we need to keep watch *with particular vigilance* over anti-Soviet currents and groupings. The GPU has reduced its apparatus but strengthened it in terms of *quality*."[4]

And, at the beginning of 1922, we must not bypass:

G. The Case of the Suicide of Engineer Oldenborger (Tried before the Verkhtrib—the Supreme Tribunal —in February, 1922)

This case is forgotten, insignificant, and totally atypical. It was atypical because its entire scale was that of a single life that had already ended. And if that life hadn't ended, it would have been that very engineer, yes, and ten more with him, forming a *Center,* who would have sat before the *Verkhtrib;* in that event the case would have been altogether typical. But as it was, an outstanding Party comrade, Sedelnikov, sat on the defendants' bench and, with him, two members of the RKI—the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection—and two trade-union officials.

But, like Chekhov's far-off broken harp-string, there was something plaintive in this trial; it was, in its own way, an early predecessor of the Shakhty and Promparty trials.

V. V. Oldenborger had worked for thirty years in the Moscow water-supply system and had evidently become its chief engineer back at the beginning of the century. Even though the Silver Age of art, four State Dumas, three wars, and three revolutions had come and gone, all Moscow drank Oldenborger's water. The Acmeists and the Futurists, the reactionaries and the revolutionaries, the military cadets and the Red Guards, the Council of People's Commissars, the Cheka, and the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection—all had drunk Oldenborger's pure cold water. He had never married and he had no children. His whole life had consisted of that one water-supply system. In 1905 he refused

3. *Sobraniye Uzakonenii RSFSR* (*Collection of Decrees of the R.S.F.S.R.*), 1922, No. 4, p. 42.
4. *Pravda,* December 17, 1922.

to permit the soldiers of the guard near the water-supply conduits —"because the soldiers, out of clumsiness, might break the pipes or machinery." On the second day of the February Revolution he said to his workers that that was enough, the revolution was over, and they should all go back to their jobs; the water must flow. And during the October fighting in Moscow, he had only one concern: to safeguard the water-supply system. His colleagues went on strike in answer to the Bolshevik coup d'état and invited him to take part in the strike with them. His reply was: "On the operational side, please forgive me, I am not on strike. . . . In everything else, I—well, yes, I am on strike." He accepted money for the strikers from the strike committee, and gave them a receipt, but he himself dashed off to get a sleeve to repair a broken pipe.

But despite this, he was an enemy! Here's what he had said to one of the workers: "The Soviet regime won't last two weeks." (There was a new political situation preceding the announcement of the New Economic Policy, and in this context Krylenko could allow himself some frank talk before the *Verkhtrib*: "It was not only the spetsy who thought that way at the time. *That is what we ourselves thought more than once.*")

But despite this, Oldenborger was an enemy! Just as Comrade Lenin had told us: to keep watch over the bourgeois specialists we need a watchdog—the RKI—the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection.

They began by assigning two such watchdogs to Oldenborger on a full-time basis. (One of them, Makarov-Zemlyansky, a swindler and a former clerk in the water system, had been fired "for improper conduct" and had entered the service of the RKI "because they paid better." He got promoted to the Central People's Commissariat because "the pay there was even better"—and, from that height, he had returned to check up on his former chief and take hearty vengeance on the man who had wronged him.) Then, of course, the local Party committee—that matchless defender of the workers' interests—wasn't dozing either. And Communists were put in charge of the water system. "Only workers are to hold the top positions; there are to be only Communists at leadership level; and the wisdom of this view was confirmed by the given trial."[5]

5. Krylenko, *op. cit.*, p. 433.

The Moscow Party organization also kept its eyes on the water-supply system. (And behind it stood the Cheka.) "In our own time we built our army on the basis of *a healthy feeling of class enmity;* in its name, we do not entrust even one responsible position to people who do not belong to our camp, without assigning them . . . a commissar."[6] And so, they all immediately began to order the chief engineer about, to supervise him, to give him instructions, and to shift the engineering personnel around without his knowledge. ("They broke up the whole nest of businessmen.")

But they did not, even so, safeguard the water-supply system. Things didn't go better with it, but worse! So slyly had that gang of engineers contrived to carry out an evil scheme. Even more: overcoming his intellectual's interim nature, as a result of which he had never in his life expressed himself sharply, Oldenborger made so bold as to describe as stupid stubbornness the actions of the new chief of the water-supply system, Zenyuk (to Krylenko, "a profoundly likable person on the basis of his internal structure").

It was at this point that it became clear that "engineer Oldenborger was consciously betraying the interests of the workers and that he was a direct and open enemy of the dictatorship of the working class." They started bringing inspection commissions into the water-supply system, but the commissions found that everything was in good order and that water was being supplied on a normal basis. The RKI men, the "rabkrinovtsy," refused to be satisfied with this. They kept pouring report after report into the RKI. Oldenborger simply wanted to "ruin, spoil, break down the water-supply system for political purposes," but he was unable to. Well, they put what obstacles in his way that they could; they prevented wasteful boiler repairs and replacing the wooden tanks with concrete ones. At meetings of the water-supply-system workers, the leaders began saying openly that their chief engineer was the "soul of organized technical sabotage" and that he should not be believed, that he should be resisted at every point.

Despite all this, the operation of the water-supply system not only didn't improve, but deteriorated.

What was particularly offensive to the "hereditary proletarian

6. *Ibid.,* p. 434.

psychology" of the officials of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection and of the trade unions was that the majority of the workers at the pumping stations "had been infected with petty-bourgeois psychology" and, unable to recognize Oldenborger's sabotage, had come to his defense. At this point, elections to the Moscow Soviet were being held and the workers nominated Oldenborger as the candidate of the water-supply system, against whom, of course, the Party cell backed its own Party candidate. However, this turned out to be futile because of the chief engineer's fraudulent authority with the workers. Nonetheless, the Party cell brought up the question with the District Party Committee, on all levels, and announced at a general meeting that "Oldenborger is the center and soul of sabotage, and will be our political enemy in the Moscow Soviet!" The workers responded with an uproar and shouts of "Untrue! Lies!" And at that point the secretary of the Party Committee, Comrade Sedelnikov, flung right in the faces of the thousand-headed proletariat there: "I am not even going to talk to such Black Hundred, reactionary pogrom-makers." That is to say: We'll talk to you somewhere else.

Party measures were also taken: they expelled the chief engineer from—no less—the collegium for administration of the water system, and kept him under constant investigation; continually summoned him before a multitude of commissions and subcommissions; kept interrogating him and giving him assignments that were to be urgently carried out. Every time he failed to appear, it was entered in the record "in case of a future trial." And through the Council of Labor and Defense (Chairman—Comrade Lenin) they got an "Extraordinary Troika" appointed to the water system. (It consisted of representatives of the RKI, the Council of Trade Unions, and Comrade Kuibyshev.)

And for the fourth year the water kept right on flowing through the pipes. And Moscovites kept on drinking it and didn't notice anything wrong.

Then Comrade Sedelnikov wrote an article for the newspaper *Ekonomicheskaya Zhizn*: "In view of the rumors disturbing the public in regard to the catastrophic state of the water mains . . ." and he reported many new and alarming rumors—even that the water system was pumping water underground and was *intentionally washing away the foundations of all Moscow*." (Set there by Ivan Kalita in the fourteenth century.) They summoned a

Commission of the Moscow Soviet. The Commission found that the "state of the water system was satisfactory and that its technical direction was efficient." Oldenborger denied all the accusations. And then Sedelnikov placidly declared: "I had set myself the task of *stirring up a fuss* about this matter in order to get the question of the spetsy taken up."

What remained for the leaders of the workers to do at this point? What was the final, infallible method? A denunciation to the Cheka! Sedelnikov resorted to just that! He "painted a picture of the conscious wrecking of the water system by Oldenborger." He did not have the slightest doubt that "a counterrevolutionary organization" existed "in the water system, in the heart of Red Moscow." And, furthermore, a catastrophic situation at the Rublevo water tower!

At this point, Oldenborger was guilty of a tactless act of rudeness, the outburst of a spineless, interim intellectual. They had refused to authorize his order for new boilers from abroad—and at the time, in Russia, it was quite impossible to fix the old ones. So Oldenborger committed suicide. (It had been just too much for one man—after all, he hadn't undergone the conditioning for that sort of thing.)

The cause was not lost, however. They could find a counterrevolutionary organization without him. RKI men would now undertake to expose the whole thing. Some concealed maneuvering went on for two months. But such was the spirit at the beginning of the NEP that "a lesson had to be taught both one side and the other." So there was a trial in the Supreme Tribunal. Krylenko was moderately severe. Krylenko was moderately merciless. He was understanding: "The Russian worker, of course, was right to see in every person *not of his own class* someone more likely to be an enemy than a friend."[7] Nevertheless: "Given the further change in our practical and general policy, perhaps we must be prepared for still greater concessions, for retreating and maneuvering. Perhaps the Party will be forced to adopt a tactical program of action which the primitive logic of *honest, dedicated warriors* is going to protest."[8]

Well, it's a fact, the workers who testified against Comrade

7. *Ibid.*, p. 435.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 438.

Sedelnikov and the RKI men were "easily brushed off" by the tribunal. And the defendant Sedelnikov replied brazenly to the threats of the accuser. "Comrade Krylenko! I know all those articles. But after all, *no one is judging class enemies here,* and those articles relate to class enemies."

However, Krylenko laid it on good and thick. Deliberately false denunciations to state institutions . . . in circumstances aggravating guilt, such as a personal grudge and the settling of personal accounts . . . the abuse of an official position . . . political irresponsibility . . . abuse of power and of the authority of government officials and members of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) . . . disorganization of the work of the water-supply system . . . injury done the Moscow Soviet and Soviet Russia, because there were few such specialists, and it was impossible to find replacements for them. *"And we won't even begin to speak of the individual, personal loss.* . . . In our time, when struggle is the chief content of our lives, we have somehow grown used to not counting these irrevocable losses."[9] The Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal must utter its weighty word: "Punishment must be assessed with all due severity! . . . We didn't come here just to crack jokes."

Good Lord, now what are they going to get? Could it really be? My reader has gotten used to prompting: *all of them to be sh——!*

And that is absolutely correct. All of them were to be publicly shamed—bearing in mind their sincere repentance! All of them to be sentenced to—ostracism and ridicule.

Two truths . . .

And Sedelnikov, allegedly, got one year in jail.

You will just have to forgive me if I don't believe it.

Oh, you bards of the twenties, painting your pictures of their bright and bubbling happiness! Even those who touched only their farthest edge, who touched them only in childhood, will never forget them. And those plug-uglies, those fat faces, busy persecuting engineers—in the twenties, too, they ate their bellies full.

And now we see also that they had been busy from 1918 on.

9. *Ibid.,* p. 458.

■

In the two trials following we will take leave of our favorite supreme accuser for a while: he is occupied with his preparations for the major trial of the SR's.[10] This spectacular trial aroused a great deal of emotion in Europe beforehand, and the People's Commissariat of Justice was suddenly taken aback: after all, we had been trying people for four years without any code, neither a new one nor an old one. And in all probability Krylenko himself was concerned about the code too. Everything had to be neatly tied up ahead of time.

The coming church trials were *internal.* They didn't interest progressive Europe. And they could be conducted without a code.

We have already had an opportunity to observe that the separation of church and state was so construed by the state that the churches themselves and everything that hung in them, was installed in them and painted in them, belonged to the state, and the only church remaining was that church which, in accordance with the Scriptures, lay *within the heart.* And in 1918, when political victory seemed to have been attained faster and more easily than had been expected, they had pressed right on to confiscate church property. However, this leap had aroused too fierce a wave of popular indignation. In the heat of the Civil War, it was not very intelligent to create, in addition, an internal front against the believers. And it proved necessary to postpone for the time being the dialogue between the Communists and the Christians.

At the end of the Civil War, and as its natural consequence, an unprecedented famine developed in the Volga area. They give it only two lines in the official histories because it doesn't add a very ornamental touch to the wreaths of the victors in that war. But the famine existed nonetheless—to the point of cannibalism, to the point at which parents ate their own children—such a famine as even Russia had never known, even in the Time of Troubles in the early seventeenth century. (Because at that time, as the historians testify, unthreshed ricks of grain survived intact

10. The provincial trials of the SR's took place even earlier, such as the one in Saratov in 1919.

beneath the snow and ice for several years.) Just one film about famine might throw a new light on everything we saw and everything we know about the Revolution and the Civil War. But there are no films and no novels and no statistical research—the effort is to forget it. It does not embellish. Besides, we have come to blame the *kulaks* as the *cause* of every famine—and just who were the kulaks in the midst of such collective death? V. G. Korolenko, in his *Letters to Lunacharsky* (which, despite Lunacharsky's promise, were never officially published in the Soviet Union),[11] explains to us Russia's total, epidemic descent into famine and destitution. It was the result of productivity having been reduced to zero (the working hands were all carrying guns) and the result, also, of the peasants' utter lack of trust and hope that even the smallest part of the harvest might be left for them. Yes, and someday someone will also count up those many carloads of food supplies rolling on and on for many, many months to Imperial Germany, under the terms of the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk—from a Russia which had been deprived of a protesting voice, from the very provinces where famine would strike—so that Germany could fight to the end in the West.

There was a direct, immediate chain of cause and effect. The Volga peasants had to eat their children because we were so impatient about putting up with the Constituent Assembly.

But political genius lies in extracting success even from the people's ruin. A brilliant idea was born: after all, three billiard balls can be pocketed with one shot. *So now let the priests feed the Volga region!* They are Christians. They are generous!

1. If they refuse, we will blame the whole famine on them and destroy the church.
2. If they agree, we will clean out the churches.
3. In either case, we will replenish our stocks of foreign exchange and precious metals.

Yes, and the idea was probably inspired by the actions of the church itself. As Patriarch Tikhon himself had testified, back in August, 1921, at the beginning of the famine, the church had

11. Published in Paris in 1922, and in the Soviet Union in samizdat in 1967.

created diocesan and all-Russian committees for aid to the starving and had begun to collect funds. But to have permitted any *direct* help to go straight from the church into the mouths of those who were starving would have undermined the dictatorship of the proletariat. The committees were banned, and the funds they had collected were confiscated and turned over to the state treasury. The Patriarch had also appealed to the Pope in Rome and to the Archbishop of Canterbury for assistance—but he was rebuked for this, too, on the grounds that only the Soviet authorities had the right to enter into discussions with foreigners. Yes, indeed. And what was there to be alarmed about? The newspapers wrote that the government itself had all the necessary means to cope with the famine.

Meanwhile, in the Volga region they were eating grass, the soles of shoes, and gnawing at door jambs. And, finally, in December, 1921, Pomgol—the State Commission for Famine Relief —proposed that the churches help the starving by donating church valuables—not all, but those not required for liturgical rites. The Patriarch agreed. Pomgol issued a directive: all gifts must be strictly voluntary! On Febraury 19, 1922, the Patriarch issued a pastoral letter permitting the parish councils to make gifts of objects that did not have liturgical and ritual significance.

And in this way matters could again have simply degenerated into a compromise that would have frustrated the will of the proletariat, just as it once had been by the Constituent Assembly, and still was in all the chatterbox European parliaments.

The thought came in a stroke of lightning! The thought came—and a decree followed! A decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee on February 26: *all* valuables were to be requisitioned from the churches—for the starving!

The Patriarch wrote to Kalinin, who did not reply. Then on February 28 the Patriarch issued a new, fateful pastoral letter: from the church's point of view such a measure is sacrilege, and we cannot approve the requisition.

From the distance of a half-century, it is easy to reproach the Patriarch. Of course, the leaders of the Christian church ought not to have been distracted by wondering whether other resources might not be available to the Soviet government, and *who* it was who had driven the Volga to famine. They ought not to have

clung to those treasures, since the possibility of a new fortress of faith arising—if it existed at all—did not depend on them. But one has also to picture the situation of that unfortunate Patriarch, not elected to his post until after the October Revolution, who had for a few short years led a church that was always persecuted, restricted, under fire, and whose preservation had been entrusted to him.

But right then and there a sure-fire campaign of persecution began in the papers, directed against the Patriarch and high church authorities who were strangling the Volga region with the bony hand of famine. And the more firmly the Patriarch clung to his position, the weaker it became. In March a movement to relinquish the valuables, to come to an agreement with the government, began even among the clergy. Their still undispelled qualms were expressed to Kalinin by Bishop Antonin Granovsky, a member of the Central Committee of Pomgol: "The believers fear that the church valuables may be used for *other purposes,* more limited and alien to their hearts." (Knowing the general principles of our Progressive Doctrine, the experienced reader will agree that this was indeed very probable. After all, the Comintern's needs and those of the East in the course of being liberated were no less acute than those of the Volga.)

The Petrograd Metropolitan, Veniamin, was similarly impelled by a mood of trust: "This belongs to God and we will give all of it by ourselves." But forced requisitions were wrong. Let the sacrifice be of our own free will. He, too, wanted verification by the clergy and the believers: to watch over the church valuables up to the very moment when they were transformed into bread for the starving. And in all this he was tormented lest he violate the censuring will of the Patriarch.

In Petrograd things seemed to be working out peacefully. The atmosphere at the session of the Petrograd Pomgol on March 5, 1922, was even joyful, according to the testimony of an eyewitness. Veniamin announced: "The Orthodox Church is prepared to give everything to help the starving." It saw sacrilege only in forced requisition. But in that case requisition was unnecessary! Kanatchikov, Chairman of the Petrograd Pomgol, gave his assurances that this would produce a favorable attitude toward the church on the part of the Soviet government. (Not

very likely, that!) In a burst of good feeling, everyone stood up. The Metropolitan said: "The heaviest burden is division and enmity. But the time will come when the Russian people will unite. I myself, at the head of the worshipers, will remove the cover [of precious metals and precious stones] from the ikon of the Holy Virgin of Kazan. I will shed sweet tears on it and give it away." He gave his blessing to the Bolshevik members of Pomgol and they saw him to the door with bared heads. The newspaper *Petrogradskaya Pravda,* in its issues of March 8, 9, and 10,[12] confirmed the peaceful, successful outcome of the talks, and spoke favorably of the Metropolitan. "In Smolny they agreed that the church vessels and ikon coverings would be melted down into ingots in the presence of the believers."

Again things were getting fouled up with some kind of compromise! The noxious fumes of Christianity were poisoning the revolutionary will. *That kind of* unity and *that way of* handing over the valuables *were not* what the starving people of the Volga needed! The spineless membership of the Petrograd Pomgol was changed. The newspapers began to howl about the "evil pastors" and "princes of the church," and the representatives of the church were told: "We don't need your *donations!* And there won't be any *negotiations* with you! *Everything belongs to the government* —and the government will take whatever it considers necessary."

And so forcible requisitions, accompanied by strife, began in Petrograd, as they did everywhere else.

And this provided the legal basis for initiating trials of the clergy.[13]

H. The Moscow Church Trial—April 26–May 7, 1922

This took place in the Polytechnic Museum. The court was the Moscow Revtribunal, under Presiding Judge Bek; the prosecutors were Lunin and Longinov. There were seventeen defendants, including archpriests and laymen, accused of disseminating the Patriarch's proclamation. This charge was more important than

12. See the articles entitled "Tserkov i Golod" ("The Church and the Famine") and "Kak budut izyaty tserkovnye tsennosti" ("How the Church Valuables Will Be Requisitioned").

13. I have taken this material from *Ocherki po Istorii Tserkovnoi Smuty* (*Essays on the History of the Troubles of the Church*), by Anatoly Levitin, Part I, samizdat, 1962, and from the stenographic notes on the questioning of Patriarch Tikhon, Trial Record, Vol. V.

the question of surrendering, or not surrendering, church valuables. Archpriest A. N. Zaozersky *had surrendered all the valuables in his own church,* but he defended in principle the Patriarch's appeal regarding forced requisition as sacrilege, and he became the central personage in the trial—and would shortly be *shot.* (All of which went to prove that what was important was not to feed the starving but to make use of a convenient opportunity to break the back of the church.)

On May 5 Patriarch Tikhon was summoned to the tribunal as a witness. Even though the public was represented only by a carefully selected audience (1922, in this respect, differing little from 1937 and 1968), nonetheless the stamp of Old Russia was still so deep, and the Soviet stamp was still so superficial, that on the Patriarch's entrance more than half of those present rose to receive his blessing.

Tikhon took on himself the entire blame for writing and disseminating his appeal. The presiding judge of the tribunal tried to elicit a different line of testimony from him: "But it isn't possible! Did you really write it in your own hand? All the lines? You probably just signed it. And *who* actually *wrote* it? And *who* were your *advisers?*" and then: "Why did you mention in the appeal the persecution to which the newspapers are subjecting you? [After all, they are persecuting *you* and why should *we* hear about it?] What did you want to express?"

The Patriarch: "That is something you will have to ask the people who started the persecution: What objectives were they pursuing?"

The Presiding Judge: "But that after all has nothing to do with religion!"

The Patriarch: "It has historical significance."

The Presiding Judge: "Referring to the fact that the decree was published while you were in the midst of talks with Pomgol, you used the expression, *behind your back?*"

The Patriarch: "Yes."

Presiding Judge: "You therefore consider that the Soviet government acted incorrectly?"

A crushing argument! It will be repeated a million times more in the nighttime offices of interrogators! And we will never answer as simply and straightforwardly as:

The Patriarch: "Yes."

The Presiding Judge: "Do you consider the state's laws obligatory or not?"

The Patriarch: "Yes, I recognize them, *to the extent that they do not contradict the rules of piety.*"

(Oh, if only everyone had answered just that way! Our whole history would have been different.)

A debate about church law followed. The Patriarch explained that if the church itself surrendered its valuables, it was not sacrilege. But if they were taken away against the church's will, it was. His appeal had not prohibited giving the valuables at all, but had only declared that seizing them against the will of the church was to be condemned.

(But that's what we wanted—expropriation against the will of the church!)

Comrade Bek, the presiding judge, was astounded: "Which in the last analysis is more important to you—the laws of the church or the point of view of the Soviet government?"

(The expected reply: "The Soviet government.")

"Very well; so it was sacrilege according to the laws of the church," exclaimed the accuser, "but what was it from the point of view of *mercy?*"

(For the first and last time—for another fifty years—that banal word *mercy* was spoken before a tribunal.)

Then there was a philological analysis of the word "svyatotatstvo," meaning "sacrilege," derived from "svyato," meaning "holy," and "tat," meaning "thief."

The Accuser: "So that means that we, the representatives of the Soviet government, are thieves of holy things?"

(A prolonged uproar in the hall. A recess. The bailiffs at work.)

The Accuser: "So you call the representatives of the Soviet government, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, thieves?"

The Patriarch: "I am citing only church law."

Then there is a discussion of the term "blasphemy." While they were requisitioning the valuables from the church of St. Basil the Great of Caesarea, the ikon cover would not fit into a box, and at that point they trampled it with their feet. But the Patriarch himself had not been present.

The Accuser: "How do you know that? *Give us the name of* the priest who told you that. [And we will arrest him immediately!]"

The Patriarch does not give the name.

That means it was a lie!

The Accuser presses on triumphantly: "No, *who* spread that repulsive slander?"

The Presiding Judge: "Give us the names of those who trampled the ikon cover! [One can assume that after doing it they left their visiting cards!] Otherwise the tribunal cannot believe you!"

The Patriarch cannot name them.

The Presiding Judge: "That means you have made an unsubstantiated assertion."

It still remained to be proved that the Patriarch wanted to overthrow the Soviet government. And here is how it was proved: "Propaganda is an attempt to prepare a mood preliminary to preparing a *revolt* in the future."

The tribunal ordered criminal charges to be brought against the Patriarch.

On May 7 sentence was pronounced: of the seventeen defendants, eleven were to be shot. (They actually shot five.)

As Krylenko said: "We didn't come here just to crack jokes."

One week later the Patriarch was removed from office and arrested. (But this was not the very end. For the time being he was taken to the Donskoi Monastery and kept there in strict incarceration, so that the believers would grow accustomed to his absence. Remember how just a short while before Krylenko had been astonished: what danger could possibly threaten the Patriarch? Truly, when the danger really does come, there's no help for it, either in alarm bells or in telephone calls.)

Two weeks after that, the Metropolitan Veniamin was arrested in Petrograd. He had not been a high official of the church before the Revolution. Nor had he even been appointed, like almost all Metropolitans. In the spring of 1917, for the first time since the days of ancient Novgorod the Great, they had *elected* a Metropolitan in Moscow and in Petrograd. A gentle, simple, easily accessible man, a frequent visitor in factories and mills, popular with the people and with the lower clergy, Veniamin had been

elected by their votes. Not understanding the times, he had seen as his task the liberation of the church from politics "because it had suffered much from politics in the past." This was the Metropolitan who was tried in:

I. The Petrograd Church Trial—June 9–July 5, 1922

The defendants, charged with resisting the requisition of church valuables, numbered several dozen in all, including a professor of theology and church law, archimandrites, priests, and laymen. Semyonov, the presiding judge of the tribunal, was twenty-five years old and, according to rumor, had formerly been a baker. The chief accuser was a member of the collegium of the People's Commissariat of Justice, P. A. Krasikov—a man of Lenin's age and a friend of Lenin when he was in exile in the Krasnoyarsk region and, later on, in emigration as well. Vladimir Ilyich used to enjoy hearing him play the violin.

Out on Nevsky Prospekt, and at the Nevsky turn-off, a dense crowd waited every day of the trial, and when the Metropolitan was driven past, many of them knelt down and sang: "Save, O Lord, thy people!" (It goes without saying that they arrested overzealous believers right on the street and in the court building also.) Most of the spectators in the court were Red Army men, but even they rose every time the Metropolitan entered in his white ecclesiastical hood. Yet the accuser and the tribunal called him *an enemy of the people.* Let us note that this term already existed.

From trial to trial, things closed in on the defense lawyers, and their humiliating predicament was already very apparent. Krylenko tells us nothing about this, but the gap is closed by an eyewitness. The tribunal roared out a threat *to arrest* Bobrishchev-Pushkin *himself*—the principal defense lawyer—and this was already so in accord with the spirit of the times, and the threat was so real that Bobrishchev-Pushkin made haste to hand over his gold watch and his billfold to lawyer Gurovich. And right then and there the tribunal actually ordered the imprisonment of a witness, Professor Yegorov, because of his testimony on behalf of the Metropolitan. As it turned out, Yegorov was quite prepared for this. He had a thick briefcase with him in which he had packed food, underwear, and even a small blanket.

The reader can observe that the court was gradually assuming forms familiar to us.

Metropolitan Veniamin was accused of entering, with evil intent, into an agreement with . . . the Soviet government, no less, and thereby obtaining a relaxation of the decree on the requisition of valuables. It was charged that his appeal to Pomgol had been maliciously disseminated among the people. (Samizdat! —self-publication!) And he had also acted in concert with the world bourgeoisie.

Priest Krasnitsky, one of the principal "Living Church" schismatics, and GPU collaborator, testified that the priests had conspired to provoke a revolt against the Soviet government on the grounds of famine.

The only witnesses heard were those of the prosecution. Defense witnesses were not permitted to testify. (Oh, how familiar it all is! More and more!)

Accuser Smirnov demanded "sixteen heads." Accuser Krasikov cried out: "The whole Orthodox Church is a subversive organization. Properly speaking, *the entire church ought to be put in prison.*"

(This was a very realistic program. Soon it was almost realized. And it was a good basis for a *dialogue.*)

Let us make use of a rather rare opportunity to cite several sentences that have been preserved from the speech of S. Y. Gurovich, who was the Metropolitan's defense attorney.

"There are no proofs of guilt. There are no facts. There is not even an indictment. . . . What will history say? [Oh, he certainly had discovered how to frighten them! History will forget and say nothing!] The requisition of church valuables in Petrograd took place in a complete calm, but here the Petrograd clergy is on the defendants' bench, and somebody's hands keep pushing them toward death. The basic principle which you stress is the good of the Soviet government. But do not forget that the church will be nourished by the blood of martyrs. [Not in the Soviet Union, though!] There is nothing more to be said, but it is hard to stop talking. While the debate lasts, the defendants are alive. When the debate comes to an end, life will end too."

The tribunal condemned ten of them to death. They waited more than a month for their execution, until the trial of the SR's

had ended. (It was as though they had processed them in order to shoot them at the same time as the SR's.) And after that, VTsIK, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, pardoned six of them. And four of them—the Metropolitan Veniamin; the Archimandrite Sergius, a former member of the State Duma; Professor of Law Y. P. Novitsky; and the barrister Kovsharov—were shot on the night of August 12–13.

We insistently urge our readers not to forget the principle of provincial multiplicity. Where two church trials were held in Moscow and Petrograd, there were twenty-two in the provinces.

■

They were in a big hurry to produce a Criminal Code in time for the trial of the SR's—the Socialist Revolutionaries. The time had come to set in place the granite foundation stones of the Law. On May 12, as had been agreed, the session of VTsIK convened, but the projected Code had not yet been completed. It had only just been delivered for analysis to Vladimir Ilyich Lenin at his Gorki estate outside Moscow. Six articles of the Code provided for execution by shooting as the maximum punishment. This was unsatisfactory. On May 15, on the margins of the draft Code, Lenin added six more articles requiring execution by shooting (including—under Article 69—propaganda and agitation, particularly in the form of an appeal for passive resistance to the government and mass rejection of the obligations of military service or tax payments).[14] And one other crime that called for execution by shooting: unauthorized return from abroad (my, how the socialists all used to bob back and forth incessantly!). And there was one punishment that was the equivalent of execution by shooting: exile abroad. Vladimir Ilyich foresaw a time not far distant when there would be a constant rush of people to the Soviet Union from Europe, and it would be impossible to get anyone voluntarily to leave the Soviet Union for the West. Lenin went on to express his principal conclusion to the People's Commissar of Justice:

14. In other words, like the Vyborg appeal, for which the Tsar's government had imposed sentences of three months' imprisonment.

"Comrade Kursky! In my opinion we ought to extend the use of execution by shooting (allowing the substitution of exile abroad) to all activities of the Mensheviks, SR's, etc. We ought to find a formulation that would connect these activities *with the international bourgeoisie.*"[15] (Lenin's italics.)

To extend the use of execution by shooting! Nothing left to the imagination there! (And did they exile very many?) *Terror is a method of persuasion.*[16] This, too, could hardly be misunderstood.

But Kursky, nonetheless, still didn't get the whole idea. In all probability, what he couldn't quite work out was a way of formulating that formulation, a way of working in that very matter of *connection.* The next day, he called on the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, Lenin, for clarification. We have no way of knowing what took place during their conversation. But following it up, on May 17, Lenin sent a second letter from Gorki:

COMRADE KURSKY!

As a sequel to our conversation, I am sending you an outline of a supplementary paragraph for the Criminal Code. . . . The basic concept, I hope, is clear, notwithstanding all the shortcomings of the rough draft: openly to set forth a statute which is both principled and politically truthful (and not just juridically narrow) to supply the motivation for the *essence* and the *justification* of terror, its necessity, its limits.

The court must not exclude terror. It would be self-deception or deceit to promise this, and in order to provide it with a foundation and to legalize it in a principled way, clearly and without hypocrisy and without embellishment, it is necessary to formulate it as broadly as possible, for only revolutionary righteousness and a revolutionary conscience will provide the conditions for applying it more or less broadly in practice.

With Communist greetings,
LENIN[17]

We will not undertake to comment on this important document. What it calls for is silence and reflection.

The document is especially important because it was one of Lenin's last directives on this earth—he had not yet fallen ill—

15. Lenin, fifth edition, Vol. 45, p. 189.
16. *Ibid.*, Vol. 39, pp. 404–405.
17. *Ibid.*, Vol. 45, p. 190.

and an important part of his political testament. Ten days after this letter, he suffered his first stroke, from which he recovered only incompletely and temporarily in the autumn months of 1922. Perhaps both letters to Kursky were written in that light and airy white marble boudoir-study at the corner of the second floor, where the future deathbed of the leader already stood waiting.

Attached to this letter is the *rough draft* mentioned in it, containing two versions of the supplementary paragraph, out of which would grow in a few years' time both Article 58-4 and all of our dear little old mother, Article 58. You read it and you are carried away with admiration: that's what it really means *to formulate it as broadly as possible!* That's what is meant by *extending its use*. You read and you recollect how broad was the embrace of that dear little old mother.

". . . propaganda or agitation, or participation in an organization, or assistance (objectively assisting *or being capable of assisting*) . . . organizations or persons whose activity has the character . . ."

Hand me St. Augustine, and in a trice I can find room in that article for him too.

Everything was inserted as required; it was retyped; execution by shooting was extended—and the session of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee adopted the new Criminal Code shortly after May 20 and decreed it to be in effect from June 1, 1922, on.

And so began, on the most legal basis, the two-month-long

J. Trial of the SR's—June 8–August 7, 1922

The court was the Supreme Tribunal, the *Verkhtrib*. The usual presiding judge, Comrade Karklin (a good name for a judge—derived from the word meaning to "croak" or "caw"), was replaced for this important trial, which was being watched closely by the entire socialist world, by the resourceful Georgi Pyatakov. (Provident fate enjoys its little jokes—but it also leaves us time to think things over! It left Pyatakov fifteen years.) There were no defense lawyers. The defendants, all leading SR's, undertook their own defense. Pyatakov bore himself harshly, and interfered with the defendants' having their say.

If my readers and I were not already sufficiently informed to know that what was important in every trial was not the charges brought nor *guilt,* so called, but *expediency,* we would perhaps not be prepared to accept this trial wholeheartedly. But *expediency* works without fail: the SR's, as opposed to the Mensheviks, were considered still dangerous, not yet dispersed and broken up, not yet finished off. And on behalf of the fortress of the newly created dictatorship (the proletariat), it was expedient to finish them off.

Someone unfamiliar with this principle might mistakenly view the entire trial as an act of Party vengeance.

Involuntarily one ponders the charges set forth in this trial, placing them in the perspective of the long-drawn-out and still unfolding history of nations. With the exception of a very limited number of parliamentary democracies, during a very limited number of decades, the history of nations is entirely a history of revolutions and seizures of power. And whoever succeeds in making a more successful and more enduring revolution is from that moment on graced with the bright robes of Justice, and his every past and future step is legalized and memorialized in odes, whereas every past and future step of his unsuccessful enemies is criminal and subject to arraignment and a legal penalty.

The Criminal Code had been adopted only one week earlier, but five whole years of postrevolutionary experience had been compressed into it. Twenty, ten, and five years earlier, the SR's had been the party next door in the effort to overthrow Tsarism, the party which had chiefly taken upon itself, thanks to the particular character of its terrorist tactics, the burden of hard-labor imprisonment, which had scarcely touched the Bolsheviks.

Now the first charge against them was that the SR's had initiated the Civil War! Yes, they began it, *they* had begun it. They were accused of armed resistance to the October seizure of power. When the Provisional Government, which they supported and which was in part made up of their members, was lawfully swept out of office by the machine-gun fire of the sailors, the SR's tried altogether illegally to defend it,[18] and even returned shot for shot,

18. The fact that their efforts in defending it were very feeble, that they were beset by hesitations, and that they renounced it right away is another matter. For all that, their *guilt* was no less.

and even called into battle the military cadets of that deposed government.

Defeated in battle, they did not repent politically. They did not get down on their knees to the Council of People's Commissars, which had declared itself to be the government. They continued to insist stubbornly that the only legal government was the one which had been overthrown. They refused to admit right away that what had been their political line for twenty years was a failure,[19] and they did not ask to be pardoned, nor to have their party dissolved and cease to be considered a party.[20]

The second charge against them was that they had deepened the abyss of the Civil War by taking part in demonstrations—by this token, rebellions—on January 5 and 6, 1918, against the lawful authority of the workers' and peasants' government. They were supporting their illegal Constituent Assembly (elected by universal, free, equal, secret, and direct voting) against the sailors and the Red Guards, who legally dispersed both the Assembly and the demonstrators. (And what good could have come of peaceable sessions of the Constituent Assembly? Only the conflagration of a three-year-long Civil War. And that is why the Civil War began, because not all the people submitted simultaneously and obediently to the lawful decrees of the Council of People's Commissars.)

The third charge was that they had not recognized the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk, that lawful, lifesaving peace of Brest-Litovsk, which had cut off not Russia's head but only parts of its torso. By this token, declared the official indictment, there were present "all the signs of *high treason* and criminal activity directed to drawing the country into war."

High treason! That is another club with two ends. It all depends on which end you have hold of.

From this followed the serious fourth charge: in the summer and fall of 1918, those final months and weeks when the Kaiser's Germany was scarcely managing to hold its own against the Allies, and the Soviet government, faithful to the Brest treaty,

19. And it had indeed been a failure, although this did not become clear immediately.

20. In the same way, all the local Russian governments, and those in outlying areas, were illegal—those in Archangel, Samara, Ufa or Omsk, the Ukraine, the Don, the Kuban, the Urals or Transcaucasia—inasmuch as they all declared themselves to be governments *after* the Council of People's Commissars had declared itself to be the government.

was supporting Germany in its difficult struggle with trainloads of foodstuffs and a monthly tribute in gold, the SR's traitorously prepared (well, they didn't actually prepare anything but, as was their custom, *did more talking* about it than anything—but what if they really had!) to blow up the railroad tracks in front of one such train, thus keeping the gold in the Motherland. In other words, they "prepared criminal destruction of our public wealth, the railroads."

(At that time the Communists were not yet ashamed of and did not conceal the fact that, yes, indeed, Russian gold had been shipped off to Hitler's future empire, and it didn't seem to dawn on Krylenko despite his study in two academic departments—history and law—nor did any of his assistants whisper the notion to him, that if steel rails are public wealth, then maybe gold ingots are too?)

From this fourth charge a fifth followed inexorably: the SR's had intended to procure the technical equipment for such an explosion with money received from Allied representatives. (They had wanted to *take* money from the Entente in order not to *give gold away* to Kaiser Wilhelm.) And this was the extreme of treason! (Just in case, Krylenko did mutter something about the SR's also having connections with Ludendorff's General Staff, but this stone had indeed landed in the wrong vegetable garden, and he quickly dropped the whole thing.)

From this it was only a very short step to the sixth charge: that the SR's had been Entente *spies* in 1918. Yesterday they had been revolutionaries, and today they were spies. At the time, this accusation probably sounded explosive. But since then, and after many, many trials, the whole thing makes one want to vomit.

Well, then, the seventh and tenth points concerned collaboration with Savinkov, or Filonenko, or the Cadets, or the "Union of Rebirth" (had it really ever existed?), and even with aristocratic, reactionary, dilettante—so-called "white-lining"—students, or even the White Guards.

This series of linked charges was well expounded by the prosecutor.[21] As a result of either hard thinking in his office, or a sudden stroke of genius on the rostrum, he managed in this trial to come up with that tone of heartfelt sympathy and friendly criticism which he would make use of in subsequent trials with

21. The title of "prosecutor" had by now been restored to him.

increasing self-assurance and in ever heavier doses, and which, in 1937, would result in dazzling success. This tone created a common ground—against the rest of the world—between those doing the judging and those who were being judged, and it played on the defendant's particular soft spot. From the prosecutor's rostrum, they said to the SR's: "*After all, you and we are revolutionaries!* [We! You and we—that adds up to us!] And how could you have fallen so low as to join with the Cadets? [Yes, no doubt your heart is breaking!] Or with the officers? Or to teach the aristocratic, reactionary, dilettante students your brilliantly worked-out scheme of conspiratorial operation?"

None of the defendants' replies is available to us. Did any of them point out that the particular characteristic of the October coup had been to declare war immediately on all the other parties and forbid them to join forces? ("They're not hauling you in, so don't you dare peep!") But for some reason one gets the feeling that some of the defendants sat there with downcast eyes and that some of them truly had divided hearts: just how could they have fallen so low? After all, for the prisoner who'd been brought in from a dark cell, the friendly, sympathetic attitude of the prosecutor in the big bright hall struck home very effectively.

And Krylenko discovered another very, very logical little path which was to prove very useful to Vyshinsky when he applied it against Kamenev and Bukharin: On entering into an alliance with the bourgeoisie, you accepted money from them. At first you took it *for the cause,* only *for the cause,* and in no wise for Party purposes. *But where is the boundary line? Who can draw that dividing line?* After all, isn't the *cause* a Party cause also? And so you sank to the level—you, the Socialist Revolutionary Party—of being supported by the bourgeoisie! Where was your revolutionary pride?

A full quota of charges—and then some—had been piled up. And the tribunal could have gone out to confer and thereupon nailed each of the prisoners with his well-merited execution—but, alas, there was a big mix-up:

a. Everything the Socialist Revolutionary Party had been accused of related to 1918.

b. Since then, on February 27, 1919, an amnesty had been declared for SR's exclusively, which pardoned all their past

belligerency against the Bolsheviks on the sole stipulation that they would not continue the struggle into the future.

c. *And they had not continued the struggle since that time.*

d. And it was now 1922!

How could Krylenko get around that one?

Some thought had been given to this point. When the Socialist International asked the Soviet government to drop charges and not put its socialist brothers on trial, some thought had been given to it.

In fact, at the beginning of 1919, in the face of threats from Kolchak and Denikin, the SR's had renounced their task of revolt against the Bolsheviks and had abandoned all armed struggle against them. (And to aid their Communist brethren, the Samara SR's had even *opened up* a section of the Kolchak front . . . which was, in fact, why the amnesty had been granted.) And right at the trial the defendant Gendelman, a member of the Central Committee, said: "Give us the chance to make use of the whole gamut of so-called civil liberties, and we will not break the law." (Give it to them! The "whole gamut," to boot! What loud-mouths!)

And it wasn't just that they weren't engaged in any opposition: they had recognized the Soviet government! In other words, they had renounced their former Provisional Government, yes, and the Constituent Assembly as well. And all they asked was a *new election* for the soviets, with freedom for all parties to engage in electoral campaigning.

Now did you hear that? Did you hear that? That's where the hostile bourgeois beast poked his snout through. How could we? After all, this is a *time of crisis!* After all, we are *encircled by the enemy*. (And in twenty years' time, and fifty years' time, and a hundred years' time, for that matter, it will be exactly the same.) And you want freedom for the parties to engage in electoral campaigning, you bastards?

Politically sober people, said Krylenko, could only laugh in reply and shrug their shoulders. It had been a just decision "immediately and by all measures of state suppression to prevent these groups from conducting propaganda against the government."[22] And specifically: in reply to the renunciation by the SR's of armed opposition and to their peaceful proposals, *they*

22. Krylenko, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

had put the entire Central Committee of the Socialist Revolutionary Party in prison! (As many of them as they could catch.)

That's how we do it!

But to keep them in prison—and hadn't it already been three years?—wasn't it necessary to try them? And what should they be charged with? "This period had not been sufficiently investigated in the pretrial examination," our prosecutor complained.

But in the meanwhile one charge was correct. In that same February, 1919, the SR's had passed a resolution which they had not put into effect, though in terms of the new Criminal Code that didn't matter at all: to carry on secret agitation in the ranks of the Red Army in order to induce the soldiers *to refuse to participate in reprisals* against the peasants.

And that was a low-down, foul betrayal of the Revolution—to try to persuade men not to take part in reprisals.

And they could also be charged with everything that the so-called "Foreign Delegation of the Central Committee" of the SR's —those prominent SR's who had fled to Europe—had said, written, and done (mostly words).

But all that wasn't enough. So here's what they thought up: "Many defendants sitting here would not deserve to be indicted in the given case, were it not for the charge of having planned *terrorist acts.*" Allegedly, when the amnesty of 1919 had been published, "none of the leaders of Soviet Justice had imagined" that the SR's had also planned to use terrorism against the leaders of the Soviet state! (Well, indeed, who could possibly have imagined that! The SR's! And terrorism, all of a sudden? And if it had come to mind, it would have been necessary to include it in the amnesty too! Or else not accept the gap in the Kolchak front. It was really very, very fortunate indeed that no one had thought of it. Not until it was needed—then someone thought of it.) So *this* charge had *not* been amnestied (for, after all, *struggle* was the only offense that had been amnestied). And so Krylenko could now make the charge!

And, in all likelihood, they had discovered so very much! So very much!

In the first place, they had discovered what the SR leaders had *said*[23] back in the first days after the October seizure of power.

23. And what hadn't those chatterboxes said in the course of a lifetime?

Chernov, at the Fourth Congress of the SR's, had said that the Party would "counterpose all its forces against any attack on the rights of the people, as it had" under Tsarism. (And everyone remembered how it had done that.) Gots had said. "If the autocrats at Smolny also infringe on the Constituent Assembly . . . the Socialist Revolutionary Party will remember its old tried and true tactics."

Perhaps it did *remember,* but it didn't make up its mind to act. Yet apparently it could be tried for it anyway.

"In this area of our investigation," Krylenko complained, because of conspiracy "there will be little testimony from witnesses." And he continued: "This has made my task extremely difficult. . . . In this area [i.e., terrorism] it is necessary, at certain moments, to wander about in the shadows."[24]

What made Krylenko's task difficult was the fact that the use of terrorism against the Soviet government *was discussed* at the meeting of the SR Central Committee in 1918 and *rejected.* And now, years later, it was necessary to prove that the SR's had been engaged in self-deception.

The SR's had said at the time that they would not resort to terrorism until and unless the Bolsheviks began to execute socialists. Or, in 1920, they had said that if the Bolsheviks were to threaten the lives of SR hostages, then the party would take up arms.[25]

So the question then was: Why did they qualify their renunciation of terrorism? Why wasn't it absolute? And how had they even dared *to think* about taking up arms! "Why were there no statements equivalent to *absolute renunciation?*" (But, Comrade Krylenko, maybe terrorism was their "second nature"?)

The SR Party carried out no terrorist acts whatever, and this was clear even from Krylenko's summing up of the charges. But the prosecution kept stretching such facts as these: One of the defendants had in mind a plan for blowing up the locomotive of a train carrying the Council of People's Commissars to Moscow. That meant the Central Committee of the SR's was guilty of terrorism. And the terrorist Ivanova had spent one night near the railroad station with *one* charge of explosives—which meant

24. Krylenko, *op. cit.,* p. 236. (What lingo!)
25. It was evidently all right to shoot the other hostages.

there had been an attempt to blow up Trotsky's train—and therefore the SR Central Committee was guilty of terrorism. And further: Donskoi, a member of the Central Committee, warned Fanya Kaplan that she would be expelled from the Party if she fired at Lenin. But that wasn't enough! Why hadn't she been categorically forbidden to? (Or perhaps: why hadn't she been denounced to the Cheka?)

It was feathers of this sort that Krylenko kept plucking from the dead rooster—that the SR's had not taken measures to stop individual terrorist acts by their unemployed and languishing gunmen. That was the whole of their terrorism. (Yes, and those gunmen of theirs didn't do anything either. In 1922, two of them, Konopleva and Semyonov, with suspicious eagerness, enriched the GPU and the tribunal with their voluntary evidence, but their evidence couldn't be pinned on the SR Central Committee—and suddenly and inexplicably these inveterate terrorists were released scot-free.)

All the evidence was such that it had to be bolstered up with props. Krylenko explained things this way in regard to one of the witnesses: "If this person had really wanted to make things up, it is unlikely he would have done so in such a way as to hit the target merely by accident."[26] (Strongly put, indeed! This could be said about any piece of fabricated testimony whatever.) Or else, about Donskoi: Could one really "suspect him of possessing the special insight to testify to what the prosecution wanted"? It was just the other way around with Konopleva: the reliability of her testimony was evidenced by the fact that she had *not* testified *to everything* the prosecution needed. (But enough for the defendants to be shot.) "If we ask whether Konopleva concocted all this, then it is . . . clear: *if one is going to concoct, one must really concoct* [He should know!], and if one is going to expose someone, one should really expose him."[27] But she, you see, did not carry it through to the end. Then things are put still another way: "After all, it is unlikely that Yefimov needed to put Konopleva in danger of execution without cause."[28] Once more correct, once more strongly put! Or, even more strongly: "Could this encounter have taken place? Such a possibility is not ex-

26. Krylenko, *op. cit.*, p. 251.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 253.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

cluded." *Not excluded?* That means *it did take place.* Off to the races!

Then, too, the "subversive group." They talked about this for a long time, and then suddenly: "Dissolved for lack of activity." So what was all the fuss about? There had been several expropriations of money from Soviet institutions (the SR's had nothing with which to work, to rent apartments, to move from city to city). But previously these had been the lovely, noble *"exes"*—as all the revolutionists called them. And now, in a Soviet court? They were "robbery and concealment of stolen goods."

Through the material adduced by the prosecution in this trial, the dull, unblinking, yellow streetlamps of the Law throw light on the whole uncertain, wavering, deluded history of this pathetically garrulous, essentially lost, helpless, and even inactive party which never was worthily led. And its every decision or lack of decision, its every casting about, upsurge, or retreat, was transformed into and regarded as total guilt . . . guilt and more guilt.

And if in September, 1921, ten months before the trial, the SR Central Committee, already sitting in the Butyrki, had written to the newly elected Central Committee that it did not agree to the overthrow of the Bolshevik dictatorship by any available means, but only through rallying the working masses and the dissemination of propaganda—all of which meant that, even as they languished in prison, they did not agree to being liberated through either terrorism or conspiracy—then that, too, was converted into their primary guilt: Aha! so that means that *you did agree* to its overthrow.

And what if they were, nevertheless, not guilty of overthrowing the government, and not guilty of terrorism, and if there had been hardly any "expropriations" at all, and if they had long since been forgiven for all the rest? Our favorite prosecutor pulled out his canonical weapon of last resort: "Ultimately, failure *to denounce* is a category of crime applying to all the defendants without exception, and it must be considered as having been proved."[29]

The Socialist Revolutionary Party was guilty of *not having squealed on itself!* Now there's something that couldn't miss! This represented a discovery that juridical thought had made in the new Code. It was a paved highway along which they would keep

29. *Ibid.*, p. 305.

driving and driving grateful descendants into Siberia!

And Krylenko burst out in a temper: "Hardened eternal enemies"—that's who the defendants are! In that case it's quite clear even without any trial what has to be done with them.

The Code was still so new that Krylenko could not even remember the main counterrevolutionary articles by their numbers —but how he slashed about with those numbers! How profoundly he cited and interpreted them! Just as if the blade of the guillotine had for decades hinged and dropped only on those articles. And especially new and important was the fact that *we did not draw* the distinction between *methods* and *means* the old Tsarist Code had drawn. Such distinctions had no influence either on the classification of the charges or on the penalties imposed! For us, intent and action were *identical!* A resolution had been passed—we would try them for that. And whether it "was carried out or not had no essential significance."[30] Whether a man whispered to his wife in bed that it would be a good thing to overthrow the Soviet government or whether he engaged in propaganda during elections or threw a bomb, it was all one and the same! *And the punishment was identical!!!*

And just as a foresighted painter proceeds from his first few brusquely drawn, angular strokes to create the whole desired portrait, so, for us, the entire panorama of 1937, 1945, and 1949 becomes ever clearer and more visible in the sketches of 1922.

But no, one thing is missing! What's missing is *the conduct of the defendants.* They have not yet become trained sheep. They are still people! We have been told little, very little, but from that little we can understand a great deal. Sometimes through carelessness, Krylenko cites what they said right at the trial. For example, the defendant Berg "accused the Bolsheviks of responsibility for the deaths of January 5"—shooting down those who were demonstrating on behalf of the Constituent Assembly. And what Liberov said was even more direct: "I admit I was guilty of failing to work hard enough at overthrowing the Bolshevik government in 1918.[31] Yevgeniya Ratner adhered to the same line, and Berg also declared: "I consider myself guilty before the workers' Russia for having been unable to fight with all my strength against the so-called workers' and peasants' government,

30. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

but I hope that my time has not yet gone."[32] (It has gone, darling, all gone!)

Of course, there is in all this an element of the ancient passion for the resounding phrase, but there is firmness too.

The prosecutor argued: the accused are dangerous to Soviet Russia because *they consider everything they did to have been a good thing*. "Perhaps certain of the defendants find their own consolation in the hope that some future chronicler will praise them or *their conduct at the trial.*"[33]

And a decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee issued after the trial declared: "At the trial itself they reserved to themselves the right to continue" their former activity.

The defendant Gendelman-Grabovsky (a lawyer himself) was conspicuous during the trial for his arguments with Krylenko on tampering with the testimony of witnesses and on "special methods of treating witnesses before the trial"—in other words, the obvious working-over they had gotten from the GPU. (It is all there! All the elements are there! There was only a little way to go before attaining the ideal.) Apparently the preliminary interrogation had been conducted under the supervision of the prosecutor—that same Krylenko. And during that process individual instances of a lack of consistency in testimony had been ironed out. Yet some testimony was presented *for the first time* only at the trial itself.

Well, so what! So there were some rough spots. So it wasn't perfect. But in the last analysis, "We have to declare altogether clearly and coldly that . . . we are not concerned with the question of *how the court of history is going to view our present deed.*"[34]

And as far as the rough spots are concerned, we will take them under advisement and correct them.

But as it was, Krylenko, squirming, had to bring up—probably for the first and last time in Soviet jurisprudence—the matter of *the inquiry,* the initial inquiry required before investigation. And here's how cleverly he handled this point: The proceeding which took place in the absence of the prosecutor and which you considered the investigation was actually *the inquiry*. And the proceeding in the presence of the prosecutor which you regarded

32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, p. 325.
34. *Ibid.*

as the reinvestigation, when all the loose ends were gathered up and all the bolts tightened, was really *the investigation.* The disorganized "materials provided by the Organs for inquiry and *unverified* by the investigation have *much less value as proof* than the materials provided by the skillfully directed investigation."[35]

Clever, wasn't it? Just try grinding that up in your mortar!

To be practical about it, Krylenko no doubt resented having to spend half a year getting ready for this trial, then another two months barking at the defendants, and then having to drag out his summation for fifteen hours, when all these defendants "had more than once been in the hands of the extraordinary Organs at times when these Organs had extraordinary powers; but, thanks to some circumstances or other, *they had succeeded in surviving.*"[36] So now Krylenko had to slave away to try and get them executed legally.

There was, of course, "only one possible verdict—execution for every last one of them"![37] But Krylenko qualifies this generously. Because this case is being watched by the whole world, the prosecutor's demand "does not constitute a directive to the court" which the latter would "be obliged to accept immediately for consideration or decision."[38]

What a fine court, too, that requires such an explanation!

And, indeed, the tribunal did demonstrate its daring in the sentences it imposed: it did not hand down the death penalty for "every last one of them," but for fourteen only. Most of the rest got prison and camp sentences, while sentences in the form of productive labor were imposed on another hundred.

And just remember, reader, remember: "All the other courts of the Republic watch what the Supreme Tribunal does. It provides them with guidelines."[39]

The sentences of the *Verkhtrib* are used "as directives for their guidance."[40] As to how many more would now be railroaded in the provinces, you can figure that out for yourself.

And, probably, on appeal the decision of the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee was worth the whole

35. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 322.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 326.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 319.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 407.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 409.

trial: the death sentences were to remain in effect, but not to be carried out for the time being. The further fate of those condemned would depend, then, on the conduct of those SR's who had not yet been arrested, apparently including those abroad as well. In other words: If you move *against* us, we'll squash them.

In the fields of Russia they were reaping the second peacetime harvest. There was no shooting except in the courtyards of the Cheka. (Perkhurov in Yaroslavl, Metropolitan Veniamin in Petrograd. And always, always, always.) Beneath the azure sky our first diplomats and journalists sailed abroad across the blue waters. And the Central Executive Committee of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies thrust into its pockets eternal *hostages.*

The members of the ruling Party read all sixty issues of *Pravda* devoted to the trial—for they *all* read the papers—and all of them said: *"Yes, yes, yes."* No one mumbled: *"No!"*

What, then, were they surprised at in 1937? What was there to complain about? Hadn't all the foundations of lawlessness been laid—first by the extrajudicial reprisals of the Cheka, and then by these early trials and this young Code? Wasn't 1937 also *expedient* (expedient for Stalin's purposes and, perhaps, History's, too, for that matter)?

Prophetically, Krylenko let it slip that they were judging not the past but the future.

Only the first swath cut by the scythe is difficult.

■

On or about August 20, 1924, Boris Viktorovich Savinkov crossed the Soviet border. He was immediately arrested and taken to the Lubyanka.[41] In all, the interrogation lasted for just one

41. Many hypotheses were advanced about his return. Only a little while ago, a certain Ardamatsky, a person obviously connected with the archives and personnel of the Committee for State Security, published a story which, despite being adorned with pretentiously inflated literary gewgaws, is evidently close to the truth. (The magazine *Neva,* No. 11, 1967.) Having induced certain of Savinkov's agents to betray him and having deceived others, the GPU used them to set a foolproof trap, convincing Savinkov that inside Russia a large underground organization was languishing for lack of a worthy leader! It would have been impossible to devise a more effective trap! And it would have been impossible for Savinkov, after such a confused and sensational life, merely to spin it out quietly to the end in Nice. He couldn't bear not trying to pull off one more feat and not returning to Russia and his death.

session, which consisted solely of voluntary testimony and an evaluation of his activity. The official indictment was ready by August 23. The speed was totally unbelievable, but it had impact. (Someone had estimated the situation quite accurately: to have forced false and pitiful testimony out of Savinkov by torture would only have wrecked the authenticity of the picture.)

In the official indictment, couched in already-well-developed terminology that turned everything upside down, Savinkov was charged with just about everything imaginable: with being a "consistent enemy of the poorest peasantry"; with "assisting the Russian bourgeoisie in carrying out its imperialist ambitions" (in other words, he was in favor of continuing the war with Germany); with "maintaining relations with representatives of the Allied command" (this would have been when he was in charge of the Ministry of War!); with "becoming a member of soldiers' committees for purposes of provocation" (i.e., he was elected by the soldiers' committees); and, last but not least, something to make even the chickens cackle with laughter—with having had "monarchist sympathies."

But all that was old hat. There were some new items too—the standard charges for all future trials: money from the imperialists; espionage for Poland (they left out Japan, believe it or not); yes, and he had also wanted to poison the Red Army with potassium cyanide (but for some reason he did not poison even one Red Army soldier).

On August 26 the trial began. The presiding judge was Ulrikh —this being our earliest encounter with him. And there was no prosecutor at all, nor any defense lawyer.

Savinkov was lackadaisical in defending himself, and he raised hardly any objection at all to the evidence. He conceived of this trial in a lyrical sense. It was his last encounter with Russia and his last opportunity to explain himself in public. And to repent. (Not of these imputed sins, but of others.)

(And that theme song fitted well here, and greatly confused the defendant: *"After all, we are all Russians together.* You and we adds up to *us.* You love Russia beyond a doubt, and we respect your love—and do we not love Russia too? In fact, are we not at present the fortress and the glory of Russia? And you wanted to fight against us? Repent!")

But it was the sentence that was most wonderful: "Imposition of the death penalty is not required in the interests of preserving revolutionary law and order, and, on the grounds that motives of vengeance should not influence the sense of justice of the proletarian masses"—the death penalty was commuted to ten years' imprisonment.

Now that was a sensation! And it confused many minds too. Did it mean a relaxation? A transformation? Ulrikh even published in *Pravda* an apologetic explanation of why Savinkov had not been executed.

You see how strong the Soviet government has become in only seven years! Why should it be afraid of some Savinkov or other! (On the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution, it is going to get weaker, and don't be too hard on us because we are going to execute thousands.)

And so, on the heels of the first riddle of his return, there would have been the second riddle of his being spared capital punishment had it not been overshadowed in May, 1925, by a third riddle: in a state of depression, Savinkov jumped from an unbarred window into the interior courtyard of the Lubyanka, and the gaypayooshniki, his guardian angels, simply couldn't manage to stop him and hold on to his big, heavy body. However, just in case—so that there wouldn't be any scandal in the service—Savinkov left them a suicide letter in which he explained logically and coherently why he was killing himself—and this letter was so authentically phrased, so clearly written in Savinkov's style and vocabulary, that even Lev Borisovich, the son of the deceased, was fully convinced of its genuineness and explained to everyone in Paris that no one except his father could have written it and that he had ended his life because he realized his political bankruptcy.[42]

And all the major and most famous trials are still ahead of us.

42. And we, silly prisoners of a later Lubyanka, confidently parroted to one another that the steel nets hanging in the Lubyanka stairwells had been installed after Savinkov had committed suicide there. Thus do we succumb to fancy legends to the extent of forgetting that the experience of jailers is, after all, international in character. Such nets existed in American prisons as long ago as the beginning of the century—and how could Soviet technology have been allowed to lag behind?

In 1937, when he was dying in a camp in the Kolyma, the former Chekist Artur Pryubel told one of his fellow prisoners that he had been one of the four who *threw* Savinkov from a fifth-floor window into the Lubyanka court-

yard! (And there is no conflict between that statement and Ardamatsky's recent account: There was a low sill; it was more like a door to the balcony than a window—they had picked the right room! Only, according to Ardamatsky, the guards were careless; according to Pryubel, they rushed him all together.)

Thus the second riddle, the unusually lenient sentence, was unraveled by the crude third "riddle."

The story ascribed to Pryubel could not be checked, but I had heard it, and in 1967 I told it to M. P. Yakubovich. He, with his still youthful enthusiasm and shining eyes, exclaimed: "I believe it. Things fit! And I didn't believe Blyumkin; I thought he was just bragging." What he had learned was this: At the end of the twenties, Blyumkin had told Yakubovich, after swearing him to secrecy, that *he* was the one who had written Savinkov's so-called suicide note, on orders from the GPU. Apparently Blyumkin was allowed to see Savinkov in his cell constantly while he was in prison. He kept him amused in the evenings. (Did Savinkov sense that death was creeping up on him . . . sly, friendly death, which gives you no chance to guess the form your end will take?) And this had helped Blyumkin acquire Savinkov's manner of speech and thought, had enabled him to enter into the framework of his last ideas.

And they ask: Why throw him out the window? Wouldn't it have been easier simply to poison him? Perhaps they showed someone the remains or thought they might need to.

And where, if not here, is the right place to report the fate of Blyumkin, who for all his Chekist omnipotence was fearlessly brought up short by Mandelstam. Ehrenburg began to tell Blyumkin's story, and suddenly became ashamed and dropped the subject. And there is a story to tell, too. After the 1918 rout of the Left SR's, Blyumkin, the assassin of the German Ambassador Mirbach, not only went unpunished, was not only spared the fate of all the other Left SR's, but was protected by Dzerzhinsky, just as Dzerzhinsky had wanted to protect Kosyrev. Superficially he converted to Bolshevism, and was kept on, one gathers, for particularly important assassinations. At one point, close to the thirties, he was secretly sent to Paris to kill Bazhenov, a member of the staff of Stalin's secretariat who had defected, and one night he succeeded in throwing him off a train. However, his gambler's blood, or perhaps his admiration of Trotsky, led Blyumkin to the Princes' Islands in Turkey, where Trotsky was living. He asked Trotsky whether there were any assignments he could carry out for him in the Soviet Union, and Trotsky gave him a package for Radek. Blyumkin delivered it, and his visit to Trotsky would have remained a secret had not the brilliant Radek already been a stool pigeon. Radek *brought down* Blyumkin, who was thereupon devoured by the maw of the monster his own hands had suckled with its first bloody milk.

Chapter 10

■

The Law Matures

But where were those mobs insanely storming the barbed-wire barricades on our western borders whom we were going to shoot, under Article 71 of the Criminal Code, for unauthorized return to the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic? Contrary to scientific prediction, there were no such crowds, and that article of the Code dictated by Lenin to Kursky remained useless. The only Russian crazy enough to do it was Savinkov, and they had ducked applying that article even to him. On the other hand, the opposite penalty—exile abroad instead of execution —was tried out immediately on a large scale.

In those days when he was composing the Criminal Code, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, developing his brilliant idea, wrote in the heat of the moment, on May 19:

> Comrade Dzerzhinsky! On the question of exiling abroad writers and professors who aid the counterrevolution: this is a measure which must be prepared most carefully. Unless we prepare well, we can commit stupidities. . . . We must arrange the business in such a way as to catch these "military spies" and keep on catching them constantly and systematically and exiling them abroad. I beg you to show this secretly, and without making any copies of it, to members of the Politburo.[1]

The extreme secrecy was natural in view of the importance

1. Lenin, fifth edition, Vol. 54, pp. 265–266.

and instructive impact of the measure. The crystal-clear line-up of forces on the class front in Soviet Russia was, to put it simply, spoiled by the presence of this shapeless, jellylike stain of the old *bourgeois* intelligentsia, which in the ideological area genuinely played the role of *military spies*—and the very best solution one could imagine was to scrape off that stagnant scum of ideas and toss it out abroad.

Comrade Lenin had already been stricken by his illness, but the members of the Politburo had apparently given their approval, and Comrade Dzerzhinsky had done the catching. At the end of 1922, about three hundred prominent Russian humanists were loaded onto—a barge, perhaps? No, they were put on a steamer and sent off to the European garbage dump. (Among those who settled down in exile and acquired reputations were the philosophers N. O. Lossky, S. N. Bulgakov, N. A. Berdyayev, F. A. Stepun, B. P. Vysheslavtsev, L. P. Karsavin, S. L. Frank, I. A. Ilin; the historians S. P. Melgunov, V. A. Myakotin, A. A. Kizevetter, I. I. Lapshin, and others; the writers and publicists Y. I. Aikhenvald, A. S. Izgoyev, M. A. Osorgin, A. V. Peshekhonov. At the beginning of 1923, additional small groups were sent off, including for example V. F. Bulgakov, the secretary of Lev Tolstoi. And because of questionable associations some mathematicians also shared this fate, including D. F. Selivanov.)

However, it didn't work out *constantly and systematically*. Perhaps the roar with which the émigrés announced that they regarded it as a "gift" made it apparent that this punishment left something to be desired, that it was a mistake to have let go good material for the executioner, and that poisonous flowers might grow on that garbage dump. And so they abandoned this form of punishment. And all subsequent purging led to either *the executioner* or the Archipelago.

The improved Criminal Code promulgated in 1926, which, in effect, continued right into Khrushchev's times, tied all the formerly scattered political articles into one durable dragnet—Article 58—and the roundup was under way. The catch swiftly expanded to include the engineering and technical intelligentsia; it was especially dangerous because it occupied a firm position in the economy and it was hard to keep an eye on it with the help of the Progressive Doctrine alone. It now became clear that

the trial in defense of Oldenborger had been a mistake—after all, a very nice little *center* had been organized there. And Krylenko's declaration that "there was no question of sabotage on the part of the engineers in 1920 and 1921"[2] had granted an all too hasty absolution. Now it was not sabotage but worse—*wrecking,* a word discovered, it appears, by a rank-and-file interrogator in the Shakhty case.

It had no sooner been established that wrecking was what had to be tracked down—notwithstanding the nonexistence of this concept in the entire history of mankind—than they began to discover it without any trouble in all branches of industry and in all individual enterprises. However, there was no unity of plan, no perfection of execution, in all these hit-or-miss discoveries, although Stalin, by virtue of his character, and of course the entire investigative branch of our judicial apparatus, evidently aspired to just that. But our Law had finally matured and could show the world something really perfect—a big, coordinated, well-organized trial, this time a trial of engineers. And that is how the Shakhty case came about.

K. The Shakhty Case—May 18–July 15, 1928

This case was tried before a Special Assize of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R., under Presiding Judge A. Y. Vyshinsky (who was still the Rector of First Moscow University); the chief accuser was N. V. Krylenko (what a significant encounter!—rather like a handing over of the juridical relay-baton).[3] There were fifty-three defendants and fifty-six witnesses. How spectacular!

Alas, in its spectacular aspect lay the weakness of this case. If one were to tie to each of the defendants only three threads of evidence, there would still have to be 159 of them. And meanwhile Krylenko had only ten fingers and Vyshinsky another ten. Of course, the "defendants strove to expose their heinous crimes

2. Krylenko, *Za Pyat Let,* p. 437.

3. And the members of the tribunal were the old revolutionaries Vasilyev-Yuzhin and Antonov-Saratovsky. The very simple folk sound of their family names inclines one to a favorable reaction. They are easy to remember. And when suddenly, in 1962, obituaries of certain victims of repression appeared in *Izvestiya,* whose signature was at the bottom? That of the long-lived Antonov-Saratovsky!

to society"—but not all of them did, only sixteen; thirteen wiggled back and forth, and twenty-four didn't admit their guilt at all.[4] This introduced an impermissible discord, and the masses could certainly not understand it. Along with its positive aspects —which had, incidentally, already been displayed in earlier trials —such as the helplessness of the defendants and of the defense attorneys, and their inability either to budge or to deflect the implacable boulder of the sentence—the shortcomings of the new trial were fully apparent. Someone less experienced than Krylenko might have been forgiven them—but not he.

On the threshold of the classless society, we were at last capable of realizing *the conflictless trial*—a reflection of the absence of inner conflict in our social structure—in which not only the judge and the prosecutor but also the defense lawyers and the defendants themselves would strive collectively to achieve their common purpose.

Anyway, the whole scale of the Shakhty case, comprising as it did the coal industry alone and the Donets Basin alone, was disproportionately paltry for this era.

It appears that then and there, on the day the Shakhty case ended, Krylenko began to dig a new, capacious pit. (Even two of his own colleagues in the Shakhty case—the public accusers Osadchy and Shein—fell into it.) And it goes without saying that the entire apparatus of the OGPU, which had already landed in Yagoda's firm hands, aided him willingly and adroitly. It was necessary to create and uncover an engineers' organization which encompassed the entire country. And for this purpose it was essential to have several strong, prominent "wreckers" at its head. And what engineer was unaware of just such an unequivocally strong and impatiently proud leader—Pyotr Akimovich Palchinsky? An important mining engineer from as far back as the beginning of the century, he had been the Deputy Chairman of the War Industry Committee during World War I—in other words, he had directed the war efforts of all Russian industry, which had managed, during the course of the war, to make up for the failures in Tsarist preparations. After February, 1917, he became the Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry. He had been persecuted under the Tsar for revolutionary activity. He had been imprisoned three times after October—in 1917, 1918, and 1922.

4. *Pravda,* May 24, 1928, p. 3.

From 1920 on, he had been a professor at the Mining Institute and a consultant to the Gosplan—the State Planning Commission. (For more details about him see Part III, Chapter 10.)

They picked this Palchinsky to be the chief defendant in a grandiose new trial. However, the thoughtless Krylenko, stepping into what was for him a new field—engineering—not only knew nothing about the resistance of materials but could not even conceive of the potential resistance of souls . . . despite ten years of already sensational activity as a prosecutor. Krylenko's choice turned out to be a mistake. Palchinsky resisted every pressure the OGPU knew—and did not surrender; in fact, he died without signing any sort of nonsense at all. N. K. von Meck and A. F. Velichko were subjected to torture with him, and they, too, appear not to have given in. We do not yet know whether they died while under torture or whether they were shot. But they proved it was *possible* to resist and that it was *possible* not to give in—and thus they left behind a spotlight of reproach to shine on all the famous subsequent defendants.

To cover up his defeat, on May 24, 1929, Yagoda published a brief GPU communiqué on the execution of the three for large-scale wrecking, which also announced the condemnation of many other unidentified persons.[5]

But how much time had been spent for nothing! Nearly a whole year! And how many nights of interrogation! And how much inventiveness on the part of the interrogators! And all to no avail. And Krylenko had to start over from the very beginning and find a leader who was both brilliant and strong, and at the same time utterly weak and totally pliable. But so little did he understand this cursed breed of engineers that another whole year was spent in unsuccessful tries. From the summer of 1929 on, he worked over Khrennikov, but Khrennikov, too, died without agreeing to play a dastardly role. They twisted old Fedotov, but he was too old, and furthermore he was a textile engineer, which was an unprofitable field. And one more year was wasted! The country was waiting for the all-inclusive wreckers' trial, and Comrade Stalin was waiting—but things just couldn't seem to fall into place for Krylenko.[6] It was only

5. *Izvestiya,* May 24, 1929.

6. And it is quite possible that this failure of his was held against him by the Leader and led to the symbolic destruction of the prosecutor—on the very same guillotine as his victims.

in the summer of 1930 that someone found or suggested Ramzin, the Director of the Thermal Engineering Institute! He was arrested, and in three months a magnificent drama was prepared and performed, the genuine perfection of our justice and an unattainable model for world justice.

L. The Promparty (Industrial Party) Trial— November 25–December 7, 1930

This case was tried at a Special Assize of the Supreme Court, with the same Vyshinsky, the same Antonov-Saratovsky, and that same favorite of ours, Krylenko.

This time none of those "technical reasons" arose to prevent the reader's being offered a full stenographic report of the trial[7] or to prohibit the attendance of foreign correspondents.

There was a majesty of concept: all the nation's industry, all its branches and planning organs, sat on the defendants' benches. (However, only the eyes of the man who arranged it all could see the crevices into which the mining industry and railroad transportation had disappeared.) At the same time there was a thrift in the use of material: there were only eight defendants in all. (The mistakes of the Shakhty trial had been taken into account.)

You are going to exclaim: Can eight men represent the entire industry of the country? Yes, indeed; we have more even than we need. Three out of eight are solely in textiles, representing the industrial branch most important for national defense. But there were, no doubt, crowds of witnesses? Just seven in all, who were exactly the same sort of wreckers as the defendants and were also prisoners. But there were no doubt bales of documents that exposed them? Drawings? Projects? Directives? Summaries of results? Proposals? Dispatches? Private correspondence? No, not one! You mean to say, *Not even one tiny piece of paper?* How could the GPU let that sort of thing get by? They had arrested all those people, and they hadn't even grabbed one little piece of paper? "There had been a lot," but "it had all been destroyed." Because "there was no place to keep the files." At the

7. *Protsess Prompartii* (*The Trial of the Promparty*), Moscow, Sovetskoye Zakonodatelstvo (Soviet Legislation Publishing House), 1931.

trial they produced only a few newspaper articles, published in the émigré press and our own. But in that event how could the prosecution present its case? Well, to be sure, there was Nikolai Vasilyevich Krylenko. And, to be sure, it wasn't the first time either. "The best evidence, no matter what the circumstances, is the confessions of the defendants."[8]

But what confessions! These confessions were not forced but inspired—repentance tearing whole monologues from the breast, and talk, talk, and more talk, and self-exposure and self-flagellation! They told old man Fedotov, who was sixty-six, that he could sit down, that he had talked long enough, but no, he kept pouring out additional explanations and interpretations. For five sessions in a row, no questions were asked. The defendants kept talking and talking and explaining and kept asking for the floor again in order to supply whatever they had left out. They presented inferentially everything the prosecution needed without any questions whatever being asked. Ramzin, after extensive explanations, went on to provide brief résumés, for the sake of clarity, as if he were addressing slow-witted students. The defendants were afraid most of all that something might be left unexplained, that someone might go unexposed, that someone's name might go unmentioned, that someone's intention to wreck might not have been made clear. And how they reviled themselves! "I am a class enemy!" "I was bribed." "Our bourgeois ideology." And then the prosecutor: "Was that your error?" And Charnovsky replied: "And crime!" There was simply nothing for Krylenko to do. For five sessions he went on drinking tea and eating cookies or whatever else they brought him.

But how did the defendants sustain such an emotional explosion? There was no tape recorder to take down their words, but Otsep, the defense attorney, described them: "The defendants' words flowed in a businesslike manner, cold and professionally calm." There you are! Such a passion for confession—and businesslike at the same time? Cold? More than that: they appear to have mumbled their glib repentance so listlessly that Vyshinsky often asked them to speak louder, more clearly, because they couldn't be heard.

The harmony of the trial was not at all disturbed by the de-

8. *Ibid.*, p. 452.

fense, which agreed with all the prosecutor's proposals. The principal defense lawyer called the prosecutor's summation *historic* and described his own as narrow, admitting that in making it he had gone against the dictates of his heart, for "a Soviet defense lawyer is first of all a Soviet citizen" and "like all workers, he, too, is outraged" at the crimes of the defendants.[9] During the trial the defense asked shy and tentative questions and then instantly backed away from them if Vyshinsky interrupted. The lawyers actually defended only two harmless textile officials and did not challenge the formal charges nor the description of the defendants' actions, but asked only whether the defendants might avoid execution. Is it more useful, Comrade Judges, "to have their corpses or their labor?"

. . . How foul-smelling were the crimes of these bourgeois engineers? Here is what they consisted of. They planned to reduce the tempo of development, as, for instance, to an over-all annual increase in production of *only* 20 to 22 percent, whereas the workers were prepared to increase it by 40 to 50 percent. They slowed down the rate of mining local fuels. They were too slow in developing the Kuznetsk Basin. They exploited theoretical and economic arguments —such as whether to supply the Donets Basin with electricity from the Dnieper power station or whether to build a supertrunk-line between Moscow and the Donbas—in order to delay the solutions of important problems. (The work stops while engineers argue!) They postponed considering new engineering projects (i.e., they did not authorize them immediately). In lectures on the *resistance of materials*, they took an *anti-Soviet line*. They installed worn-out equipment. They tied up capital funds, for example, by using them for costly and lengthy construction projects. They carried out unnecessary (!) repairs. They misused metals (some grades of iron were wanting). They created an imbalance between the departments of a plant and between the supply of raw materials and the capacity for processing them industrially. (This was particularly notable in the textile industry, where they built one or two factories more than they needed to process the cotton harvest.) Then they leaped from minimal to maximal plans. And obvious wrecking began through the *accelerated* development of that same unfortunate textile industry. Most importantly, they planned sabotage in the field of electric power—even though none was ever carried out. Thus wrecking did not take the form of

9. *Ibid.*, p. 488.

actual damage done but remained within the area of operational planning, yet it was intended to lead to a nationwide crisis and even to economic paralysis in 1930! But it didn't—and only because of the competitive industrial and financial plans of the masses (doubling the figures!). . . .

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," begins the skeptical reader.

What? That isn't enough for you? But if, at the trial, we repeat every point and chew it over five or eight times, then perhaps it turns out not to be so negligible?

"Yeah, yeah, yeah." The reader of the sixties nonetheless sticks to his own view. "Mightn't all that have happened precisely because of those competing industrial and financial plans? Aren't things bound to be out of balance if any union meeting, without consulting Gosplan, can twist the ratios around as it pleases?"

Oh, the prosecutor's bread is bitter! After all, they decided to publish every last word! That meant that engineers would read it too. "You've made your bed, now lie in it." And Krylenko rushed in fearlessly to discuss and to question and cross-question engineering details! And the inside pages and inserts of the enormous newspapers were full of small print about fine technical points. The notion was that every reader would be overcome by the sheer mass of material, that he wouldn't have enough time, even if he used up all his evenings and his rest days too, and so he wouldn't read it all but would only notice the refrain following every few paragraphs: "We were wreckers, wreckers, wreckers."

But suppose someone did begin, and read every last line?

In that case, he would come to see, through the banality of self-accusations, composed with such ineptitude and stupidity, that the Lubyanka boa constrictor had gotten involved in something outside its competence, its own kind of work, that what breaks free of the crude noose is the strong-winged thought of the twentieth century. There the prisoners are: in the dock, submissive, repressed—but their thought leaps out. Even their terrified, tired tongues manage to name everything with its proper name and to tell us everything.

. . . Here is the situation in which they worked. Kalinnikov: "Well, to be sure, a situation of technical distrust was created." Larichev: "Whether we wanted to or not, we still had to produce that 42 millions

of tons of petroleum [i.e., it had been thus ordered from on high] . . . because, no matter what, 42 million tons of petroleum could not have been produced under any circumstances whatever."[10]

All the work of that unhappy generation of our engineers was squeezed between two such impossibilities. The Thermal Engineering Institute was proud of its principal research achievement, which was the sharply improved coefficient of fuel consumption. On this basis, lower requirements for fuel production had been stipulated in the preliminary plan. *And that meant wrecking*—reducing fuel resources. In the transportation plan, they had provided for all freight cars to be equipped with automatic coupling. *And that meant wrecking:* they had tied up capital funds. After all, it takes a long time to introduce automatic coupling, and the capital investment involved in installing it can only be recouped over a long period, and we want everything immediately! In order to make more efficient use of single-track railroads, they decided to increase the size of the locomotives and freight cars. And was that considered modernization? *No, it was wrecking.* Because in that case it would have been necessary to invest funds in strengthening the roadbeds and the superstructures of the bridges. From the profound economic consideration that in America capital is cheap and labor dear, and that the situation here is just the opposite, and that we therefore ought not to borrow things with monkeylike imitativeness, Fedotov concluded that it was useless for us to purchase expensive American assembly-line machinery. For the next ten years it would be more profitable for us to buy less sophisticated English machinery and to put more workers on it, since it was inevitable that in ten years' time whatever we had purchased would be replaced anyway, no matter what. And we could then buy more expensive machinery. So that, too, was *wrecking.* Alleging economy as his reason, what he really wanted, they charged, was to avoid having the most advanced type of machinery in Soviet industry. They began to build new factories out of reinforced concrete, instead of cheaper ordinary concrete, on the grounds that over a hundred-year period reinforced concrete would recoup the additional investment many times over. So that, too, was *wrecking*: tying up capital; using up scarce reinforcing rods when iron was in short supply. (What was it supposed to be kept for—false teeth?)

From among the defendants, Fedotov willingly conceded: Of course, if every kopeck must be counted today, then it could be considered wrecking. The English say: I'm not rich enough to buy cheap goods.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 325.

He tries softly to explain to the hardheaded prosecutor: "Theoretical approaches of every kind project norms which in the final analysis are [they will be considered to be] wrecking. . . ."[11]

Well, tell me now: how much more clearly could a frightened defendant speak out? What is theory to us is wrecking to you! Because you are compelled to grab today, without any thought for tomorrow.

Old Fedotov tries to explain where thousands and millions of rubles are lost in the insane rush of the Five-Year Plan: Cotton is not sorted where it is grown so that every factory can be sent that grade and kind of cotton it requires; instead, it is shipped any old way, all mixed up. But the prosecutor doesn't listen to him. With the stubbornness of a block of stone he keeps coming back again and again—ten times—to the more obvious question he has put together out of children's building blocks: Why did they begin to build the so-called "factory-palaces," with high ceilings, broad corridors, and unnecessarily good ventilation? Was that not the most obvious sort of *wrecking?* After all, that amounted to tying up capital irrevocably! The bourgeois wreckers explain to him that the People's Commissariat of Labor wanted to build factories for the workers in the land of the proletariat which were spacious and had good air. [That means there are also *wreckers* in the People's Commissariat of Labor. Make a note of that!] The doctors had insisted on thirty feet of space between floors, and Fedotov reduced it to twenty—so why not to sixteen? Now that was *wrecking*! (If he had reduced it to fifteen, that would have been flagrant wrecking: he would have wanted to create the nightmare conditions of a capitalist factory for free Soviet workers.) They explain to Krylenko that in relation to the entire cost of the factory and its equipment, this difference accounted for 3 percent of the total—but no, again and again and again, he keeps on about the height of the ceilings! And how did they dare install such powerful ventilators? They took into account the hottest summer days. Why the hottest days? So what! Let the workers sweat a little on the hottest days!

And in the meantime: "The disproportions were inherent. . . . Bungling organization saw to that before there was any 'Engineers Center.'" (Charnovsky.)[12] "No wrecking activities were ever necessary. . . . All one had to do was carry out the *appropriate actions* and everything would happen on its own." (Charnovsky again.)[13] He could not have expressed himself more clearly. And he said this after many months in the Lubyanka and from the defendants' bench in

11. *Ibid.*, p. 365.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

court. The *appropriate actions*—i.e., those imposed by bungling *higher-ups*—were quite enough: carry them out and the unthinkable plan would destroy itself. Here was their kind of wrecking: "We *had the capability* of producing, say, 1,000 tons and *we were ordered* [in other words, by a nonsensical plan] to produce 3,000, so we took no steps to produce them."[14] . . .

You must admit that for an official, double-checked, spruced-up stenographic record in those years, this is not so little.

On many occasions Krylenko drives his actors to tones of exhaustion, thanks to the nonsense they are compelled to grind out over and over again . . . like a bad play in which the actor is ashamed for the dramatist, and yet has to go on and on anyway, to keep body and soul together.

Krylenko: "Do you agree?"

Fedotov: "I agree . . . even though in general I do not think . . ."[15]

Krylenko: "Do you confirm this?"

Fedotov: "Properly speaking . . . in certain portions . . . and so to speak, in general . . . yes."[16]

For the engineers (those who were still free, not yet imprisoned, and who had to face the necessity of working cheerfully after the defamation at the trial of their whole class), there was no way out. They were damned if they *did* and damned if they *didn't*. If they went forward, it was wrong, and if they went backward, it was wrong too. If they hurried, they were hurrying for the purpose of wrecking. If they moved methodically, it meant wrecking by slowing down tempos. If they were painstaking in developing some branch of industry, it was intentional delay, sabotage. And if they indulged in capricious leaps, their intention was to produce an imbalance for the purpose of wrecking. Using capital for repairs, improvements, or capital readiness was tying up capital funds. And if they allowed equipment to be used until it broke down, it was a diversionary action! (In addition, the interrogators would get all this information out of them by subjecting them to sleeplessness and punishment cells and then de-

14. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 425.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 356.

manding that they give convincing examples of how they might have carried on wrecking activities.)

"Give us a clear example! Give us a clear example of your wrecking activity!" the impatient Krylenko urges them on.

(They will give you outstanding examples! Just wait! Soon someone will write *the history of the technology* of those years! He will give you examples—and negative examples. He will evaluate for you all the convulsions of your epileptic "Five-Year Plan in Four Years." Then we will find out how much of the people's wealth and strength was squandered. Then we will find out how all the best projects were destroyed, and how the worst projects were carried out by the worst means. Well, yes, if the Mao Tse-tung breed of Red Guard youths supervise brilliant engineers, what good can come of it? Dilettante enthusiasts—they were the ones who egged on their even stupider leaders.)

Yes, full details are a disservice. Somehow the more details provided, the less the evil deeds seem to smell of execution.

But just a moment! We've not had everything yet! The most important crimes all lie ahead! Here they are, here they come, comprehensible and intelligible to every illiterate! The Promparty (1) prepared the way for the Intervention; (2) took money from the imperialists; (3) conducted espionage; (4) assigned cabinet posts in a future government.

And that did it! All mouths were shut. And all those who had been expressing their reservations fell silent. And only the tramping of demonstrators could be heard, and the roars outside the window: *"Death! Death! Death!"*

What about some more details? Why should you want more details? Well, then, if that's the way you want it; but they will only be more frightening. They were all acting under orders from the French General Staff. After all, France doesn't have enough worries, or difficulties, or party conflicts of its own, and it is enough just to whistle, and, lo and behold, divisions will march. . . . Intervention! First they planned it for 1928. But they couldn't come to an agreement, they couldn't tie up all the loose ends. All right, so they postponed it to 1930. But once more they couldn't agree among themselves. All right, 1931 then. And, as a matter of fact, here's how it was to go: France herself would not fight but, as her commission for organizing the deal, would

take the Ukraine right bank as her share. England wouldn't fight either, of course, but, in order to raise a scare, promised to send her fleet into the Black Sea and into the Baltic—in return, she would get Caucasian oil. The actual warriors would, for the most part, be the following: 100,000 émigrés (true, they had long since scattered to the four winds, but it would take only a whistle to gather them all together again immediately); Poland —for which she would get half the Ukraine; Rumania (whose brilliant successes in World War I were famous—she was a formidable enemy). And then there were Latvia and Estonia. (These two small countries would willingly drop all the concerns of their young governments and rush forth en masse to do battle.) And the most frightening thing of all was the direction of the main blow. How's that? Was it already known? Yes! It would begin from Bessarabia, and from there, *keeping to* the right bank of the Dnieper, it would move *straight* on Moscow.[17] And at that fateful moment, would not all our railroads certainly be blown up? No, not at all. *Bottlenecks would be created!* And the Promparty would also yank out the fuses in electric power stations, and the entire Soviet Union would be plunged into darkness, and all our machinery would come to a halt, including the textile machinery! And sabotage would be carried out. (Attention, defendants! You must not name your methods of sabotage, nor the factories which were your objectives, nor the geographic sites involved, until the closed session. And you must not name names, whether foreign or our own!) Combine all this with the fatal blow which will have been dealt the textile industry by that time! Add the fact that the saboteurs will have constructed two or three textile factories in Byelorussia which will serve as *a base of operations for the interventionists.*[18] With the textile factories already in their hands, the interventionists would march implacably on Moscow. But here was the cleverest part of the whole plot: though they didn't succeed in doing so, they had wanted to drain the Kuban marshes and the Polesye swamps, and the swamp near Lake Ilmen (Vyshinsky had forbidden them to name the exact places, but one of the witnesses blurted them

17. Who drew that arrow for Krylenko on a cigarette pack—was it not drawn by the same hand that thought up our entire defense strategy in 1941?

18. *Protsess Prompartii,* p. 356. This was not intended as a joke.

out), and then the interventionists would open up the shortest routes and would get to Moscow without wetting their feet or their horses' hoofs. (And why was it so hard for the Tatars? Why was it that Napoleon didn't reach Moscow? Yes! It was because of the Polesye and the Ilmen swamps. And once those swamps were drained, the capital would lie exposed.) On top of that, don't forget to add that hangars had been built there under the guise of sawmills (places not to be named!) so that the planes of the interventionists would not get wet in the rain and could be taxied into them. And *housing for the interventionists* had also been built (do not name the places!). (And where had all the homeless occupation armies been quartered in previous wars?) The defendants had received all the directives on these matters from the mysterious foreign gentlemen K. and R. (It is strictly forbidden to name their names—or to name the countries they come from!)[19] And most recently they had even begun "the preparation of treasonable actions by individual units of the Red Army." (Do not name the branches of the service, nor the units, nor the names of any persons involved!) True, they hadn't done any of this; but they had also intended (though they hadn't done that either) to organize within some central army institution a cell of financiers and former officers of the White armies. (Ah, the White Army? Write it down! Start making arrests!) And cells of anti-Soviet students. (Students? Write it down! Start making arrests!)

(Incidentally, don't push things too far. We wouldn't want the workers to get despondent and begin to feel that everything is falling apart, that the Soviet government has been caught napping. And so they also threw a good deal of light on that side of it: that *they had intended to do a lot and had accomplished very little, that not one industry had suffered serious losses!*)

But why didn't the Intervention take place anyway? For various complex reasons. Either because Poincaré hadn't been elected in France, or else because our émigré industrialists decided that their former enterprises had not yet been sufficiently restored by the Bolsheviks—let the Bolsheviks do more. And then, too, they couldn't seem to come to terms with Poland and Rumania.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 409.

So, all right, there hadn't been any intervention, but there was, at least, a Promparty! Do you hear the tramp of marching feet? Do you hear the murmur of the working masses: *"Death! Death! Death!"*? And the marchers were "those who in the event of war would have to atone with their deaths, and deprivations and sufferings, for the work of these men."[20]

(And it was as if he had looked into a crystal ball: it was indeed with their deaths, and deprivations and sufferings, that those trusting demonstrators would atone in 1941 for the work . . . *of these men!* But where is your finger pointing, prosecutor? At whom is your finger pointing?)

So then—why was it the Industrial *Party*? Why a party and not an Engineering-Technical Center? We are accustomed to having a *Center!*

Yes, there was a Center too. But they had decided to reorganize themselves into a party. It was more respectable. That way it would be easier to fight over cabinet posts in the future government. It would "mobilize the engineering-technical masses for the struggle for power." And whom would they be struggling against? Other parties, of course. Against the Working Peasants Party—the TKP—in the first place, for after all they had 200,000 members! Against the Menshevik Party in the second place! And as for a *Center,* those three parties together were to have constituted a United Center. But the GPU had destroyed them. "And it's a good thing they destroyed us." (All the defendants were glad!)

(And it was flattering to Stalin to annihilate three more *parties.* Would there have been any glory, indeed, in merely adding another three "Centers" to his list?)

And having a party instead of a Center meant having another Central Committee—yes, the Promparty's own Central Committee! True, there had not been any party conferences, nor had there been any elections, not even one. Whoever wanted to be on the Central Committee just joined up—five people all told. They all made way for one another, and they all yielded the post of chairman to one another too. There were no meetings—either of the Central Committee (no one else would remember this, but Ramzin would remember it very well indeed, and he

20. *Ibid.,* p. 437.

would name names) or of the groups from various branches of industry. There seemed even to be some dearth of members. As Charnovsky said, "There *never was* any formal organization of a Promparty." And how many members had there been? Larichev: "A count of members would have been difficult; the exact composition was unknown." And how had they carried out their wrecking? How had directives been communicated? Well, it was just a matter of whoever met whomever in some particular institution—directives were passed on orally. From then on everyone would carry out his own wrecking on his own conscience. (Well, now, Ramzin confidently named two thousand members. And whenever he named two, they arrested five. According to the documents in the trial, there were altogether thirty to forty thousand engineers throughout the U.S.S.R. That meant they would arrest every seventh one, and terrify the other six.) And what about contacts with the Working Peasants Party? Well, they might meet in the State Planning Commission, or else in the Supreme Council of the Economy, and "plan systematic acts against village Communists."

Where have we seen all this before? Aha! In *Aïda*. They are seeing Radames off on his campaign, and the orchestra is thundering, and eight warriors are standing there in helmets and with spears—and two thousand more are painted on the backdrop.

That's your Promparty.

But that's all right. It works. The show goes on! (Today it is quite impossible to believe just how threatening and serious it all looked at the time.) And it is hammered in by repetition, and every individual episode is gone over several times. And because of this the awful visions multiply. And, in addition, so that things won't become too bland, the defendants suddenly "forget" something terribly unimportant, or else they "try to renounce testimony"—and right then and there "they pin them down with cross-questioning," and it all winds up being as lively as the Moscow Art Theatre.

But Krylenko pressed too hard. On the one hand he planned to disembowel the Promparty—to disclose its social basis. That was a question of class, and his analysis couldn't go wrong. But Krylenko abandoned the Stanislavsky method, didn't assign the roles, relied on improvisation. He let everyone tell his own story

of his own life, and what his relationship to the Revolution had been, and how he was led to participate in wrecking.

And, in one fell swoop, that thoughtless insertion, that human picture, spoiled all five acts.

The first thing that we learn to our astonishment is that all eight of these big shots of the bourgeois intelligentsia came from poor families: the son of a peasant; one of the many children of a clerk; the son of an artisan; the son of a rural schoolteacher; the son of a peddler. At school, they were all impoverished and earned the money for their education themselves, from the ages of twelve, thirteen, and fourteen. Some gave lessons, and some worked on locomotives. And here was what was monstrous: no one barred their way to an education! They all completed the courses in high school and in higher technological institutions, and they became important and famous professors. (How could that have been? They always told us that under Tsarism only the children of landowners and capitalists . . . Those calendars certainly couldn't have been lying!)

And here and *now,* in the Soviet period, engineers were in a very difficult position. It was almost impossible for them to provide their children with a higher education (after all, the children of the intelligentsia had the lowest priority, remember!). The court didn't argue, nor did Krylenko. (And the defendants themselves hastened to qualify what they had said, asserting that, against the background of the general and over-all victories, this, of course, was unimportant.)

Here we begin to distinguish bit by bit among the defendants, who, up to this point, had talked very much like one another. Their age differential also divided them with respect to probity. Those close to sixty and older made statements that aroused a friendly, sympathetic reaction. But forty-three-year-old Ramzin and Larichev, and thirty-nine-year-old Ochkin (the same one who had denounced Glavtop—the Main Fuels Committee—in 1921), were glib and shameless. And all the major testimony about the Promparty and intervention comes from them. Ramzin was the kind of person (as a result of his early and extraordinary successes) who was shunned by the entire engineering profession, and he endured it. At the trial he caught Krylenko's hints on the wing and volunteered precise statements. All the charges were

founded on Ramzin's recollections. He possessed such self-control and force that he might very well have conducted plenipotentiary talks in Paris about intervention (on assignment from the GPU, obviously). Ochkin, too, was a fast climber: at twenty-nine he had already possessed "the unlimited trust of the Council of Labor and Defense and the Council of People's Commissars."

One couldn't say the same about sixty-two-year-old Professor Charnovsky: Anonymous students had persecuted him in the wall newspapers. After twenty-three years of lecturing, he had been summoned to a general students' meeting to "give an account of his work." He hadn't gone.

And in 1921 Professor Kalinnikov had headed an open struggle against the Soviet government—specifically a professors' strike. What it amounted to was this: Back in the days of the Stolypin repression, the Moscow Higher Technical School had won academic autonomy (including the right to fill important posts, elect a rector, etc.). In 1921 the professors in this school had re-elected Kalinnikov to a new term as rector, but the People's Commissariat didn't want him there and had designated its own candidate. However, the professors went on strike and were supported by the students—at that time there were no truly proletarian students—and Kalinnikov was rector for a whole year despite the wishes of the Soviet government. (It was only in 1922 that they had wrung the neck of that autonomy, and even then, in all probability, not without arrests.)

Fedotov was sixty-six years old and he had been a factory engineer eleven years longer than the whole life span of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party—from which the Soviet Communist Party had sprung. He had worked at all the spinning mills and textile factories in Russia. (How hateful such people are, and how desirable it is to get rid of them as quickly as possible!) In 1905 he had left his position as a director of the Morozov textile firm and the high salary which went with it because he preferred to attend the "Red Funerals" which followed the caskets of the workers killed by the Cossacks. And now he was ill, had poor eyesight, and was too weak to leave home at night even to go to the theater.

And such people organized intervention? And economic ruin?

Charnovsky had not had any free evenings for many years be-

cause he had been so busy with his teaching and with developing new sciences—such as the science of the organization of production and the scientific principles of rationalization. I recall from my own childhood the engineering professors of those years, and that's exactly what they were like. Their evenings were given up to their students at all levels, and they didn't get home to their families until 11 P.M. After all, at the beginning of the Five-Year Plan there were only thirty thousand of them for the whole country. They were all strained to the breaking point.

And it was these people who were supposed to have contrived a crisis, to have spied in exchange for handouts?

Ramzin uttered just one honest phrase during the whole trial: "The path of wrecking is alien *to the inner structure* of engineering."

Throughout the trial Krylenko forced the defendants to concede apologetically that they were "scarcely conversant" with or were "illiterate" in politics. After all, politics is much more difficult and much loftier than some kind of metallurgy or turbine design. In politics your head won't help you, nor will your education. Come on! Answer me! What was your attitude toward the October Revolution when it happened? Skeptical. *In other words,* immediately hostile. Why? Why? Why?

Krylenko hounded them with his theoretical questions—and as a result of simple human slips of the tongue inconsistent with their assigned roles, the nucleus of the truth is disclosed to us—as to *what really had taken place* and from what the entire bubble had been blown.

What the engineers had first seen in the October coup d'état was ruin. (And for three years there had truly been ruin and nothing else.) Beyond that, they had seen the loss of even the most elementary freedoms. (And these freedoms never returned.) How, then, could engineers *not have wanted* a democratic republic? How could *engineers* accept the *dictatorship of the workers,* the dictatorship of their subordinates in industry, so little skilled or trained and comprehending neither the physical nor the economic laws of production, but now occupying the top positions, from which they supervised the *engineers?* Why shouldn't the engineers have considered it more natural for the structure of society to be headed by those who could intelligently direct its activity? (And, excepting only the question of the *moral* leader-

ship of society, is not this precisely where all social cybernetics is leading today? Is it not true that professional politicians are boils on the neck of society that prevent it from turning its head and moving its arms?) And why shouldn't engineers have political views? After all, politics is not even a science, but is an empirical area not susceptible to description by any mathematical apparatus; furthermore, it is an area subject to human egotism and blind passion. (Even in the trial Charnovsky speaks out: "Politics must, nonetheless, be guided to some degree by the findings of technology.")

The wild pressures of War Communism could only sicken the engineers. An engineer cannot participate in irrationality, and until 1920 the majority of them did nothing, even though they were barbarically impoverished. When NEP—the New Economic Policy—got under way, the engineers willingly went back to work. They accepted NEP as an indication that the government had come to its senses. But, alas, conditions were not what they had been. The engineers were looked on as a socially suspicious element that did not even have the right to provide an education for its own children. Engineers were paid immeasurably low salaries in proportion to their contribution to production. But while their superiors demanded successes in production from them, and discipline, they were deprived of the authority to impose this discipline. Any worker could not only refuse to carry out the instructions of an engineer, but could insult and even strike him and go unpunished—and as a representative of the ruling class the worker was *always right* in such a case.

Krylenko objects: "Do you remember the Oldenborger trial?" (In other words, how we, so to speak, defended him.)

Fedotov: "Yes. He had to lose his life in order to attract some attention to the predicament of the engineer."

Krylenko (disappointed): "Well, that was not how the matter was put."

Fedotov: "He died and *he was not the only one to die. He died voluntarily, and many others were killed.*"[21]

Krylenko was silent. That meant it was true. (Leaf through the Oldenborger trial again, and just imagine the persecution. And with the additional final line: "Many other were killed.")

21. *Ibid.*, p. 228.

So it was that the engineer was to blame for everything, even when he had done nothing wrong. But if he actually had made a real mistake, and after all he was a human being, he would be torn to pieces unless his colleagues could manage to cover things up. For would *they* value honesty? So the engineers then were forced at times to lie to the Party leadership?

To restore their authority and prestige, the engineers really had to unite among themselves and help each other out. They were all in danger. But they didn't need any kind of conference, any membership cards, to achieve such unity. Like every kind of mutual understanding between intelligent and clear-thinking people, it was attained by a few quiet, even accidental words; no kind of voting was called for. Only narrow minds need resolutions and the Party stick. (And this was something Stalin could never understand, nor could the interrogators, nor their whole crowd. They had never had any experience of human relationships of that kind. They had never seen anything *like that* in Party history!) In any case, that sort of unity had long existed among Russian engineers in their big illiterate nation of petty tyrants. It had already been tested for several decades. But now a new government had discovered it and become alarmed.

Then came 1927. And the rationality of the NEP period went up in smoke. And it turned out that the entire NEP was merely a cynical deceit. Extravagantly unrealistic projections of a super-industrial forward leap had been announced; impossible plans and tasks had been assigned. In those conditions, what was there for the collective engineering intelligence to do—the engineering leadership of the State Planning Commission and the Supreme Council of the Economy? To submit to insanity? To stay on the sidelines? It would have cost them nothing. One can write any figures one pleases on a piece of paper. But "our comrades, our colleagues in actual production, will not be able to fulfill these assignments." And that meant it was necessary to try to introduce some moderation into these plans, to bring them under the control of reason, to eliminate entirely the most outrageous assignments. To create, so to speak, their own State Planning Commission of engineers in order to correct the stupidities of the leaders. And the most amusing thing was that this was in *their* interests—the interests of the leaders—too. And in the interests of all industry and of all the people, since ruinous

decisions could be avoided, and squandered, scattered millions could be picked up from the ground. To defend *quality*—"the heart of technology"—amid the general uproar about *quantity,* planning, and overplanning. And to indoctrinate students with this spirit.

That's what it was, the thin, delicate fabric of the truth. *That is what it really was.*

But to utter such thoughts aloud in 1930 meant being shot.

And yet it was still too little and too invisible to arouse the wrath of the mob.

It was therefore necessary to reprocess the silent and redeeming collusion of the engineers into crude wrecking and intervention.

Thus, in the picture they substituted, we nonetheless caught a fleshless—and fruitless—vision of the truth. The work of the stage director began to fall apart. Fedotov had already blurted out something about sleepless nights (!) during the eight months of his imprisonment; and about some important official of the GPU who had recently *shaken his hand* (?) (so there must have been a deal: you play your roles, and the GPU will carry out its promises?). And even the witnesses, though their role was incomparably less important, began to get confused.

Krylenko: "Did you participate in this group?"

Witness Kirpotenko: "Two or three times, when questions of intervention were being considered."

And that was just what was needed!

Krylenko (encouragingly): "Go on."

Kirpotenko (a pause): *"Other than that nothing is known."*

Krylenko urges him on, tries to give him his cue again.

Kirpotenko (stupidly): *"Other than intervention nothing is known to me."*[22]

Then, when there was an actual confrontation with Kupriyanov, the facts no longed jibed. Krylenko got angry, and he shouted at the inept prisoners:

"Then you just have to fix things so you come up with the same answers."

And in the recess, behind the scenes, everything was once more brought up to snuff. All the defendants were once again nervously awaiting their cues. And Krylenko prompted all eight

22. *Ibid.,* p. 354.

of them at once: the émigré industrialists had published an article abroad to the effect that they had held no talks at all with Ramzin and Larichev and knew nothing whatever about any Promparty, and that the testimony of the witnesses had in all likelihood been forced from them by torture. Well, what are you going to say to that?

Good Lord! How outraged the defendants were! They clamored for the floor without waiting their turns. What had become of that weary calm with which they had humiliated themselves and their colleagues for seven days? Boiling indignation at those émigrés burst from them. They demanded permission to send a written declaration to the newspapers *in defense of GPU methods.* (Now, wasn't that an embellishment? Wasn't that a jewel?) And Ramzin declared: "Our presence here is sufficient proof that we were not subjected to tortures and torments!" (And what, pray tell, would be the use of tortures that made it impossible for the defendants to appear in court!) And Fedotov: "Imprisonment did me *good* and not only me. . . . I even feel *better* in prison than in freedom." And Ochkin: "Me too. I feel better too!"

It was out of sheer generosity that Krylenko and Vyshinsky declined their offer of a collective declaration. They certainly would have written one! And they certainly would have signed it!

But maybe someone had some lingering suspicions still? Well, in that case, Comrade Krylenko vouchsafed them a flash of his brilliant logic. "If we should admit even for one second that these people were telling untruths, then *why were they arrested* and why did they all at once start *babbling* their heads off?"[23]

Now that is the power of logic for you! For a thousand years prosecutors and accusers had never even imagined that the fact of arrest might in itself be a proof of guilt. If the defendants were innocent, then why had they been arrested? And once they had been arrested, that meant they were guilty!

And, indeed, *why had they started babbling away?*

"The question of torture we discard! . . . But let us put the question psychologically: Why did they confess? And I ask you: *What else could they have done?*"[24]

23. *Ibid.*, p. 452.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 454.

Well, how true! How psychological! If you ever *served* time in that institution, just recollect: what else was there to do?

(Ivanov-Razumnik wrote[25] that in 1938 he was imprisoned in the same cell in the Butyrki as Krylenko, and that Krylenko's place in the cell was under the board bunks. I can picture that vividly—since I have crawled there myself. The bunks were so low that the only way one could crawl along the dirty asphalt floor was flat on one's stomach, but newcomers could never adapt and would try to crawl on all fours. They would manage to get their heads under, but their rear ends would be left sticking out. And it is my opinion that the supreme prosecutor had a particularly difficult time adapting, and I imagine that his rear end, not yet grown thin, used to stick out there for the greater glory of Soviet justice. Sinful person that I am, I visualize with malice that rear end sticking out there, and through the whole long description of these trials it somehow gives me solace.)

Yes, the prosecutor expounded, continuing along the same line, if all this about tortures was true, then it was impossible to understand what could have induced all the defendants to confess, unanimously and in chorus, without any arguments and deviations. Just where could such colossal collusion have been carried out? After all, they had no chance to communicate with each other during the interrogation period.

(Several pages further along, a witness who survived will tell us *where.*)

Now it is not for me to tell the reader but for the reader to tell me just what the notorious "riddle of the Moscow trials of the thirties" consisted of. At first people were astounded at the *Promparty* trial, and then that riddle was transferred to the trials of the Party leaders.

After all, they didn't put on trial in open court the two thousand who had been dragged into it, or even two or three hundred, but only eight people. It is not as hard as all that to direct a chorus of eight. And *as for his choices,* Krylenko was free to *choose* from thousands over a period of two years. Palchinsky had not been broken, but had been shot—and posthumously named "the leader of the Promparty," which is what he was called in the testimony, even though no word of his survived.

25. Ivanov-Razumnik, *Tyurmy i Ssylki* (*Prisons and Exiles*), New York, Chekhov Publishing House, 1953.

And they had hoped to beat what they wanted out of Khrennikov, and Khrennikov didn't yield to them either; therefore he appeared just once in the record—in a footnote in small type: "Khrennikov died during the course of his interrogation." The small type you are using is for fools, but we at least know, and we will write it in double-sized letters: TORTURED TO DEATH DURING INTERROGATION. He, too, was posthumously named a leader of the Promparty, but there wasn't one least little fact from him, not one tiny piece of testimony in the general chorus, not one. *Because he did not give even one!* (And then all at once Ramzin appeared! He was a find. What energy and what a grasp! And he was ready to do anything in order to *live!* And what talent! He had been arrested only at the end of the summer, just before the trial really—and he not only managed to enter fully into his role, but it seemed as though he had written the whole play. He had absorbed a whole mountain of interrelated material, and he could serve it up spick-and-span, any name at all, any fact at all. And sometimes he manifested the languid ornateness of a *bigwig* scientist: "The activity of the Promparty was so widespread that even in the course of an eleven-day trial there is no opportunity to disclose it in total detail.") (In other words, go on and look for it, look further!) "I am firmly convinced that a small anti-Soviet stratum *still exists* in engineering circles." (Go get 'em, go get 'em, grab some more!) And how capable he was: he knew that it was a *riddle,* and that a riddle must be given an artistic explanation. And, unfeeling as a stick of wood, he found then and there within himself "the traits of the Russian criminal, for whom purification lay in public recantation before all the people."[26]

So what it comes down to is that all Krylenko and the GPU had to do was select the right people. But the risk was small. Goods spoiled in interrogation could always be sent off to the grave. And whoever managed to get through both the frying pan and the fire could always be given medical treatment and be fattened up, and put on public trial!

26. Ramzin has been undeservedly neglected in Russian memories. In my view, he fully deserved to become the prototype of a cynical and dazzling traitor. The Bengal fire of betrayal! He wasn't the only such villain of this epoch, but he was certainly a prominent case.

So then where is the riddle? How they were *worked over?* Very simply: Do you want to *live?* (And even those who don't care about themselves care about their children or grandchildren.) Do you understand that it takes absolutely no effort to have you shot, without your ever leaving the courtyards of the GPU? (And there was no doubt whatever about that. Whoever hadn't yet learned it would be given a course in being ground down by the Lubyanka.) But it is useful both for you and for us to have you act out a certain drama, the text for which you, as specialists, are going to write yourselves, and we, as prosecutors, are going to learn by heart . . . and we will try to remember the technical terms. (Krylenko sometimes made mistakes during the trial. He said "freight car axle" instead of "locomotive axle.") It will be unpleasant to perform and you will feel ashamed, but you just have to suffer through it. After all, it is better to *live.* And what assurance have we that you won't shoot us afterward? Why should we take vengeance on you? You are excellent specialists and you have not committed any crimes and we value you. Look at how many wrecking trials there have been; you'll see that no one who behaved has been shot. (Mercy for the defendants who cooperated in one trial was an important prerequisite for the success of the next. And hope was transmitted via this chain right up to Zinoviev and Kamenev themselves.) But the understanding is that you have to carry out *all* our conditions to the very last! The trial must work for the good of socialist society.

And the defendants would fulfill *all* the conditions.

Thus they served up all the subtlety of engineers' intellectual opposition as dirty wrecking on a level low enough to be comprehensible to the last illiterate in the country. (But they had not yet descended to the level of ground glass in the food of the workers. The prosecutors had not yet thought that one up.)

A further theme was ideological motivation. Had they begun to wreck? It was the result of a hostile motivation. And now they jointly collaborated in confessing? It was once again the result of ideological motivation, for they had been converted (in prison) by the blazing blast-furnace face of the third year of the Five-Year Plan! Although in their last words they begged for their lives, that wasn't the main thing for them. (Fedotov: "There is no forgiveness for us. The prosecutor is right!") The main

thing for these strange defendants right at that moment, on the threshold of death, was to convince the people and the whole world of the infallibility and farsightedness of the Soviet government. Ramzin, in particular, glorified the "revolutionary consciousness of the proletarian masses and their leaders," who had been "able to find immeasurably more dependable paths of economic policy" than the scientists, and who had calculated the tempos of economic growth rate far more correctly. And then: "I had come to understand it was necessary to make a jump ahead, and that it was necessary to make a *leap* forward,[27] that it was necessary to capture by storm," etc., etc. And Larichev declared: "The Soviet Union is invincible against the weakening capitalist world." And Kalinnikov: "The dictatorship of the proletariat is an inevitable necessity." And further: "The interests of the people and the interests of the Soviet government merge into one purposeful whole." Yes, and in addition, in the countryside "the general line of the Party, the destruction of the kulaks, is correct." They had time, while awaiting execution, to deliver themselves of judgments about everything. And the repenting intellectuals even had enough voice for such a prophecy as this: "In proportion to the development of society, individual life is going to become more circumscribed. . . . Collective will is the highest form."[28]

Thus it was that with eight-horse traction all the goals of the trial were attained:

1. All the shortages in the country, including famine, cold, lack of clothing, chaos, and obvious stupidities, were blamed on the engineer-wreckers.

2. The people were terrified by the threat of imminent intervention from abroad and therefore prepared for new sacrifices.

3. Leftist circles in the West were warned of the intrigues of their governments.

4. The solidarity of the engineers was destroyed; all the intelligentsia was given a good scare and left divided within itself. And so that there should be no doubt about it, this purpose of the trial was once more clearly proclaimed by Ramzin:

27. *Protsess Prompartii*, p. 504. And that is how they were talking here in the Soviet Union, *in our own country*, in 1930, when Mao Tse-tung was still a stripling.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 510.

"I would like to see that, in consequence of the present trial of the Promparty, *the dark and shameful past of the entire intelligentsia* will be buried once and for all."[29]

Larichev joined in: "This caste must be *destroyed!* . . . There is not and *there cannot be loyalty among engineers!*"[30] And Ochkin too: The intelligentsia "is some kind of mush. As the state accuser has said, it has no backbone, and this constitutes unconditional spinelessness. . . . How immeasurably superior is the sensitivity of the proletariat."[31]

So now just why should such diligent collaborators be shot?

And that was the way the history of our intelligentsia has been written for decades—from the anathema of 1920 (the reader will remember: "not the brains of the nation, but shit," and "the ally of the black generals," and "the hired agent of imperialism") right up to the anathema of 1930.

So should anyone be surprised that the word "intelligentsia" got established here in Russia as a term of abuse.

That is how the public trials were manufactured. Stalin's searching mind had once and for all attained its ideal. (Those blunderheads Hitler and Goebbels would come to envy it and rush into their shameful failure with the burning of the Reichstag.)

The standard had been set, and now it could be retained perennially and performed over again every season—according to the wishes of the Chief Producer. And in fact the Chief wanted another within three months. The rehearsal time was very short, but that was all right. Come and see the show! Only in our theater! A premiere.

M. The Case of the All-Union Bureau of the Mensheviks—March 1–9, 1931

The case was heard by a Special Assize of the Supreme Court, the presiding judge in this case, for some reason, being N. M. Shvernik. Otherwise everyone was in his proper place—Antonov-Saratovsky, Krylenko, and his assistant Roginsky. The pro-

29. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 508.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 509. For some reason, the main thing about the proletariat is always, believe it or not, *sensitivity*. Always via the nostrils.

ducers were sure of themselves. For after all, the subject wasn't technical but was Party material, ordinary stuff. So they brought fourteen defendants onto the stage.

And it all went off not just smoothly but brilliantly.

I was twelve at the time. For three years I had been attentively reading everything about politics on the enormous pages of *Izvestiya.* I read the stenographic records of these two trials line by line. In the Promparty case, I had already felt, in my boyish heart, superfluity, falsehood, fabrication, but at least there were spectacular stage sets—universal intervention, the paralysis of all industry, the distribution of ministerial portfolios! In the trial of the Mensheviks, all the same stage sets were brought out, but they were more pallid. And the actors spoke their lines without enthusiasm. And the whole performance was a yawning bore, an inept, tired repetition. (Could it be that Stalin felt this, too, through his rhinoceros hide? How else can one explain his calling off the case of the Working Peasants Party after it had already been prepared, or why there were no more trials for several years?)

It would be boring to base our interpretations once again on the stenographic record. In any case, I have fresher evidence from one of the principal defendants in this case—Mikhail Petrovich Yakubovich. At the present moment, his petition for rehabilitation, exposing all the dirty work which went on, has filtered through to samizdat, our savior, and people are reading it just as it happened.[32] His story offers material proof and explanation of the whole chain of Moscow trials of the thirties.

How was the nonexistent "Union Bureau" created? The GPU had been given an assignment: they had been told to prove that the Mensheviks had adroitly wormed their way into—and seized —many important government jobs for counterrevolutionary purposes. The genuine situation did not jibe with this plan. There were no real Mensheviks in important posts. But then there were no real Mensheviks on trial either. (True, they say V. K. Ikov

32. He was refused rehabilitation. After all, the case in which he was tried had entered the golden tables of our history. After all, one cannot take back even one stone, because the entire building might collapse. Thus it is that M.P.Y. still has his conviction on his record. However, for his consolation, he has been granted a *personal* pension for his revolutionary activity! What monstrosities exist in our country.

actually was a member of the quiet, do-nothing illegal Moscow Bureau of the Mensheviks—but they didn't know that at the trial. He was processed in the second echelon and received a mere *eight.*) The GPU had its own design: two from the Supreme Council of the Economy, two from the People's Commissariat of Trade, two from the State Bank, one from the Central Union of Consumer Cooperatives, one from the State Planning Commission. (What a boring and unoriginal plan! Back in 1920, they had ordered, in the matter of the "Tactical Center," that it include two from the Union of Rebirth, two from the Council of Public Figures, two from this and that, etc.) Therefore they *picked* the individuals who suited them on the basis of their positions. And whether they were Mensheviks or not depended on whether one believed rumors. Some who got caught this way were not Mensheviks at all, but directives had been given to consider them Mensheviks. The genuine political views of those accused did not interest the GPU in the least. Not all the defendants even knew each other. And they raked in Menshevik witnesses, too, wherever they could find them.[33] (All the witnesses, without exception, were later given prison terms too.) Ramzin testified prolifically and obligingly at this trial also. But the GPU pinned its hopes on the principal defendant, Vladimir Gustavovich Groman (with the idea that he would *help* work up this *case* and be amnestied in return), and on the provocateur Petunin. (I am basing all this on Yakubovich's report.)

Let us now introduce M. P. Yakubovich. He had begun his revolutionary activity so early that he had not even finished the gymnasium. In March, 1917, he was already Chairman of the Smolensk Soviet. Impelled by the strength of his convictions, which continued to lead him on, he became a strong and successful orator. At the Congress of the Western Front, he impetuously called those journalists who were demanding that the war continue *enemies of the people.* And this was in April, 1917. He was

33. One was Kuzma A. Gvozdev, a man whose fate was bitter. This was the same Gvozdev who had been chairman of the workers' group in the War Industry Committee, and whom the Tsarist government, in an excess of stupidity, had arrested in 1916, and the February Revolution had made Minister of Labor. Gvozdev became one of the martyr *long-termers* of Gulag. I do not know how many years he had been imprisoned before 1930, but from 1930 on he was in prison continuously, and my friends knew him in Spassk Camp, in Kazakhstan, as late as 1952.

nearly hauled from the rostrum, and he apologized, but thereafter in his speech he maneuvered so adroitly and so won over his listeners that at the end he called them enemies of the people again, and this time to stormy applause. He was elected to the delegation sent to the Petrograd Soviet, and hardly had he arrived there than—with the informality of those days—he was named to the Military Commission of the Petrograd Soviet. There he exerted a strong influence on the appointment of army commissars,[34] and in the end he became an army commissar on the Southwestern Front and personally arrested Denikin in Vinnitsa (after the Kornilov revolt), and regretted very much indeed (during the trial as well) that he had not shot him on the spot.

Clear-eyed, always sincere, and always completely absorbed in his own ideas—whether they were right or wrong—he was counted as—and was—one of the younger members of the Menshevik Party. This did not prevent him, however, from presenting his own projects to the Menshevik leadership with boldness and passion, such as, in the spring of 1917, proposing the formation of a Social Democratic government, or, in 1919, recommending that the Mensheviks enter the Comintern. (Dan and the others invariably rejected all his plans and their variations, and quite condescendingly, for that matter.) In July, 1917, he was very pained by the action of the socialist Petrograd Soviet in approving the Provisional Government's calling up army units for use against other socialists, considering it a fatal error even though the other socialists were using armed force. Hardly had the October coup taken place than Yakubovich proposed to his party that it should support the Bolsheviks wholeheartedly and work to improve the state structure they were creating. In the upshot, he was finally ostracized by Martov, and by 1920 he had left the ranks of the Mensheviks once and for all, convinced that he could not get them to follow the Bolsheviks' path.

I have gone into all this detail to make it quite clear that throughout the Revolution Yakubovich had been not a Menshevik but a Bolshevik, and one who was entirely sincere and disinterested. In 1920 he was still one of the Smolensk food-supply commissars, and the only one of them who was not a

34. He is not to be confused with Colonel Yakubovich of the General Staff, who, at the same time and the same meetings, represented the War Ministry.

Bolshevik. He was even honored by the People's Commissariat of Food Supply as the *best.* (He claims that he got along without reprisals against the peasantry, but I do not know whether or not this is true. At his trial he did, however, recall that he had organized "antispeculation" detachments.) In the twenties he had edited the *Torgovaya Gazeta* (*The Trade Gazette*) and had occupied other important posts. He had been arrested in 1930 when just such Mensheviks as he, "who had wormed their way in," were to be rounded up in accordance with the GPU plans.

He had immediately been called in for questioning by Krylenko, who, earlier and always, as the reader already knows, *was organizing* the chaos of the preliminary inquiry into efficient interrogation. It turned out that they knew one another very well, for in the years between the first trials Krylenko had gone to that very Smolensk Province *to improve food-requisition work.* And here is what Krylenko now said:

"Mikhail Petrovich, I am going to talk to you frankly: I consider you a Communist! [His words encouraged Yakubovich and raised his spirits greatly.] *I have no doubt of your innocence. But it is our Party duty, yours and mine, to carry out this trial.* [Krylenko had gotten his orders from Stalin, and Yakubovich was all atremble for the sake of the cause, like a zealous horse rushing into the horse collar.] I beg you to help me in every possible way, and to assist the interrogation. And in case of unforeseen difficulties during the trial, at the most difficult moments, I will ask the chairman of the court to give you the floor."

!!!!

And Yakubovich promised. Conscious of his duty, he promised. Indeed, the Soviet government had never before given him such a responsible assignment.

And thus there was not the slightest need even to touch Yakubovich during the interrogation. But that was too subtle for the GPU. Like everyone else, Yakubovich was handed over to the butcher-interrogators, and they gave him *the full treatment* —the freezing punishment cell, the hot box, beating his genitals. They tortured him so intensively that Yakubovich and his fellow defendant Abram Ginzburg opened their veins in desperation. After they had received medical attention, they were no longer tortured and beaten. Instead, the *only* thing to which they were

subjected was two weeks of sleeplessness. (Yakubovich says: "Just to be allowed to sleep! Neither conscience nor honor matters any longer.") And then they were confronted with others who had already given in and who urged them to "confess" . . . to utter nonsense. And the interrogator himself, Aleksei Alekseyevich Nasedkin, said: "I know, I know, none of this actually happened! But they insist on it!"

On one occasion when Yakubovich had been summoned to interrogation, he found there a prisoner who had been tortured. The interrogator smiled ironically: "Moisei Isayevich Teitelbaum begs you to take him into your anti-Soviet organization. You can speak as freely as you please. I am going out for a while." He went out. Teitelbaum really did beg: "Comrade Yakubovich! I beg you, please take me into your Union Bureau of Mensheviks! They are accusing me of taking 'bribes from foreign firms' and threatening me with execution. But I would rather die a counterrevolutionary than a common criminal!" (It was likelier that they had promised him that as a counterrevolutionary he wouldn't be shot! And he wasn't wrong either: they gave him a juvenile prison term, a "fiver.") The GPU was so short on Mensheviks they had to recruit defendants from volunteers! (And, after all, Teitelbaum was being groomed for an important role—communication with the Mensheviks abroad and with the Second International! But they honorably kept the deal they had made with him—a "fiver.") And with the interrogator's approval Yakubovich *accepted* Teitelbaum as a member of the Union Bureau.

Several days before the trial began, the *first* organizing session of the Union Bureau of the Mensheviks convened in the office of the senior interrogator, Dmitri Matveyevich Dmitriyev—so as to coordinate things, and so that each should understand his own role better. (That's how the Central Committee of the Prom-party convened too! That's *where* the defendants "could have met"—to answer Krylenko's earlier leading question.) But such a mountain of falsehood had been piled up that it was too much to absorb in one session and the participants got things mixed up, couldn't master it in one rehearsal, and were called together a second time.

What did Yakubovich feel as he went into the trial? Should

he not, in revenge for all the tortures to which he had been subjected, for all the falsehood shoved into his breast, create a sensational scandal and startle the world? But still:

1. To do so would be to stab the Soviet government in the back! It would be to negate his entire purpose in life, everything he had lived for, the whole path he had taken to extricate himself from mistaken Menshevism and become a right-minded Bolshevik.

2. After a scandal like that they wouldn't just allow him to die; they wouldn't just shoot him; they would torture him again, but this time out of vengeance, and drive him insane. But his body had already been exhausted by tortures. Where could he find the moral strength to endure new ones? Where could he unearth the required heroism?

(I wrote down his arguments as his heated words rang out—this being a most extraordinary chance to get, so to speak, a "posthumous" explanation from a participant in such a trial. And I find that it is altogether as though Bukharin or Rykov were explaining the reasons for their own mysterious submissiveness at their trials. Theirs were the same sincerity and honesty, the same devotion to the Party, the same human weakness, the same lack of the moral strength needed to fight back, because they had no *individual* position.)

And at the trial Yakubovich not only repeated obediently all the gray mass of lies which constituted the upper limit of Stalin's imagination—and the imagination of his apprentices and his tormented defendants. But he also played out his inspired role, as he had promised Krylenko.

The so-called Foreign Delegation of the Mensheviks—in essence the entire top level of their Central Committee—formally dissociated themselves from the defendants in a statement published in *Vorwärts*. They declared there that the trial was a shameful travesty, built on the testimony of provocateurs and unfortunate defendants forced into it by terror; that the overwhelming majority of the defendants had left the Party more than ten years earlier and had never returned; and that absurdly large sums of money were referred to at the trial, representing more than the party had ever disposed of.

And Krylenko, having read the article, asked Shvernik to

permit the defendants to reply—the same kind of pulling-all-strings-at-once he had resorted to at the trial of the Promparty. They all spoke up, and they all defended the methods of the GPU against the Menshevik Central Committee.

But what does Yakubovich remember today about his "reply" and his last speech? He recalls that he not only spoke as befitted his promise to Krylenko, but that instead of simply getting to his feet, he was seized and lifted up—like a chip on a wave—by a surge of anger and oratory. Anger against whom? After having learned what torture meant, and attempting suicide and coming close to death more than once, he was at this point in a real, honest-to-God rage. But not at the prosecutor or the GPU! Oh, no! At the Foreign Delegation of the Mensheviks!!! Now there's a psychological switch for you! There they sat, unscrupulous and smug, in security and comfort—for even the poverty of émigré life was, of course, comfort in comparison with the Lubyanka. And how could they refuse to pity *those* who were on trial, their torture and suffering? How could they so impudently dissociate themselves from them and deliver these unfortunates over to their fate? (The reply Yakubovich delivered was powerful, and the people who had cooked up the trial were delighted.)

Even when he was describing this in 1967, Yakubovich shook with rage at the Foreign Delegation, at their betrayal, their repudiation, their treason to the socialist Revolution—exactly as he had reproached them in 1917.

I did not have the stenographic record of the trial at the time. Later I found it and was astonished. Yakubovich's memory—so precise in every little detail, every date, every name—had in this instance betrayed him. He had, after all, said at the trial that the Foreign Delegation, on orders from the Second International, *had instructed them to carry out wrecking activities.* He no longer remembered this. The foreign Mensheviks' statement was neither unscrupulous nor smug. They had indeed *pitied* the unfortunate victims of the trial but did point out that they had not been Mensheviks for a long time—which was quite true. What was it, then, that made Yakubovich so unalterably and sincerely angry? And exactly how could the Foreign Delegation *not* have consigned the defendants to their fate?

We like to take our anger out on those who are weaker, those

who cannot answer. It is a human trait. And somehow the arguments to prove we are right appear out of nowhere.

Krylenko said in his summation for the prosecution that Yakubovich was a fanatic advocate of counterrevolutionary ideas and demanded therefore that he be *shot.*

And Yakubovich that day felt a tear of gratitude roll down his cheek, and he feels it still to this day, after having dragged his way through many camps and detention prisons. Even today he is grateful to Krylenko for not humiliating him, for not insulting him, for not ridiculing him as a defendant, and for calling him correctly a *fanatic* advocate (even of an idea contrary to his real one) and for demanding simple, noble execution for him, that would put an end to all his sufferings! In his final statement, Yakubovich agreed with Krylenko himself: "The crimes to which I have confessed [he endowed with great significance his success in hitting on the expression *'to which I have confessed'*—anyone who understood would realize that he meant 'not those *which I committed'*] deserve the highest measure of punishment—and I do not ask any forgiveness! I do not ask that my life be spared!" (Beside him on the defendants' bench, Groman got excited! "You are insane! You have to consider your comrades. You don't have the right!")

Now wasn't he a find for the prosecutor?

And can one still say the trials of 1936 to 1938 are unexplained?

Was it not through this trial that Stalin came to understand and believe that he could readily round up all his loud-mouth enemies and get them organized for just such a performance as this?

■

And may my compassionate reader now have mercy on me! Until now my pen sped on untrembling, my heart didn't skip a beat, and we slipped along unconcerned, because for these fifteen years we have been firmly protected either by legal revolutionality or else by revolutionary legality. But from now on things will be painful: as the reader will recollect, as we have had explained to us dozens of times, beginning with Khrushchev, "from

approximately 1934, violations of Leninist norms of legality began." And how are we to enter this abyss of illegality now? How are we to drag our way along yet another bitter stretch of the road?

However, *these* trials which follow were, because of the fame of the defendants, a cynosure for the whole world. They did not escape the attention of the public. They were written about. They were interpreted and they will be interpreted again and again. It is for us merely to touch lightly on their *riddle.*

Let us make one qualification, though not a big one; the published stenographic records did not coincide completely with what was said at the trials. One writer who received an entrance pass—they were given out only to selected individuals—took running notes and subsequently discovered these differences. All the correspondents also noted the snag with Krestinsky, which made a recess necessary in order to get him back on the track of his assigned testimony. (Here is how I picture it. Before the trial a chart was set up for emergencies: in the first column was the name of the defendant; in the second, the method to be used during the recess if he should depart from his text during the open trial; in the third column, the name of the Chekist responsible for applying the indicated method. So if Krestinsky departed from his text, then who would come on the run and what that person would do had already been arranged.)

But the inaccuracies of the stenographic record do not change or lighten the picture. Dumfounded, the world watched three plays in a row, three wide-ranging and expensive dramatic productions in which the powerful leaders of the fearless Communist Party, who had turned the entire world upside down and terrified it, now marched forth like doleful, obedient goats and bleated out everything they had been ordered to, vomited all over themselves, cringingly abased themselves and their convictions, and confessed to crimes they could not in any wise have committed.

This was unprecedented in remembered history. It was particularly astonishing in contrast with the recent Leipzig trial of Dimitrov. Dimitrov had answered the Nazi judges like a roaring lion, and, immediately afterward, his comrades in Moscow, members of that same unyielding cohort which had made the whole world tremble—and the greatest of them at that, those who had

been called the "Leninist guard"—came before the judges drenched in their own urine.

And even though much appears to have been clarified since then—with particular success by Arthur Koestler—the *riddle* continues to circulate as durably as ever.

People have speculated about a Tibetan potion that deprives a man of his will, and about the use of hypnosis. Such explanations must by no means be rejected: if the NKVD possessed such methods, clearly *there were no moral rules* to prevent resorting to them. Why not weaken or muddle the will? And it is a known fact that in the twenties some leading hypnotists gave up their careers and entered the service of the GPU. It is also reliably known that in the thirties a school for hypnotists existed in the NKVD. Kamenev's wife was allowed to visit her husband before his trial and found him not himself, his reactions retarded. (And she managed to communicate this to others before she herself was arrested.)

But why was neither Palchinsky nor Khrennikov broken by the Tibetan potion or hypnosis?

The fact is that an explanation on a higher, psychological plane is called for.

One misunderstanding in particular results from the image of these men as old revolutionaries who had not trembled in Tsarist dungeons—seasoned, tried and true, hardened, etc., fighters. But there is a plain and simple mistake here. These defendants were *not those* old revolutionaries. They had acquired that glory by inheritance from and association with the Narodniks, the SR's, and the Anarchists. They were the ones, the bomb throwers and the conspirators, who had known hard-labor imprisonment and real prison *terms*—but even *they* had never in their lives experienced a *genuinely merciless interrogation* (because such a thing did not exist at all in Tsarist Russia). And *these others,* the Bolshevik defendants at the treason trials, had never known either interrogation or real prison terms. The Bolsheviks had never been sentenced to special "dungeons," any Sakhalin, any special hard labor in Yakutsk. It is well known that Dzerzhinsky had the hardest time of them all, that he had spent all his life in prisons. But, according to our yardstick, he had served *just a normal "tenner,"* just a simple *"ten-ruble bill,"*

like any ordinary collective farmer in our time. True, included in that tenner were three years in the hard-labor central prison, but that is nothing special either.

The Party leaders who were the defendants in the trials of 1936 to 1938 had, in their revolutionary pasts, known short, easy imprisonment, short periods in exile, and had never even had a whiff of hard labor. Bukharin had many petty arrests on his record, but they amounted to nothing. Apparently, he was never imprisoned anywhere for a whole year at a time, and he had just a wee bit of exile on Onega.[35] Kamenev, despite long years of propaganda work and travel to all the cities of Russia, spent only two years in prison and one and a half years in exile. In our time, even sixteen-year-old kids got *five* right off. Zinoviev, believe it or not, *never spent as much as three months in prison.* He never received *even one sentence!* In comparison with the ordinary natives of our Archipelago they were all *callow youths;* they didn't know what prison was like. Rykov and I. N. Smirnov had been arrested several times and had been imprisoned for five years, but somehow they went through prison very easily, and they either escaped from exile without any trouble at all or were released because of an amnesty. Until they were arrested and imprisoned in the Lubyanka, they hadn't the slightest idea what a real prison was nor what the jaws of unjust interrogation were like. (There is no basis for assuming that if Trotsky had fallen into those jaws, he would have conducted himself with any less self-abasement, or that his resistance would have proved stronger than theirs. He had had no occasion to prove it. He, too, had known only easy imprisonment, no serious interrogations, and a mere two years of exile in Ust-Kut. The terror Trotsky inspired as Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council was something he acquired very cheaply, and does not at all demonstrate any true strength of character or courage. Those who have condemned many others to be shot often wilt at the prospect of their own death. The two kinds of toughness are not connected.) And as for Radek—he was a plain provocateur. (And he wasn't the only one in these three trials!) And Yagoda was an inveterate, habitual criminal.

35. All the information here comes from Volume 41 of the *Granat Encyclopedia,* in which either autobiographical or reliable biographical essays on the leaders of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) are collected.

(This murderer of millions simply could not imagine that his superior Murderer, up top, would not, at the last moment, stand up for him and protect him. Just as though Stalin had been sitting right there in the hall, Yagoda confidently and insistently begged him directly for mercy: "I appeal to you! *For you* I built two great canals!" And a witness reports that at just that moment a match flared in the shadows behind a window on the second floor of the hall, apparently behind a muslin curtain, and, while it lasted, the outline of a pipe could be seen. Whoever has been in Bakhchisarai may remember that Oriental trick. The second-floor windows in the Hall of Sessions of the State Council are covered with iron sheets pierced by small holes, and behind them is an unlit gallery. It is never possible to guess down in the hall itself whether someone is up there or not. The Khan remained invisible, and the Council always met as if in his presence. Given Stalin's out-and-out Oriental character, I can readily believe that he watched the comedies in that October Hall. I cannot imagine that he would have denied himself this spectacle, this satisfaction.)

And, after all, our entire failure to understand derives from our belief in the unusual nature of these people. We do not, after all, where ordinary confessions signed by ordinary citizens are concerned, find their reasons for denouncing themselves and others so fulsomely baffling. We accept it as something we understand: a human being is weak; a human being gives in. But we consider Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Pyatakov, I. N. Smirnov to be supermen to begin with—and, in essence, our failure to understand is due to that fact alone.

True, the directors of this dramatic production seem to have had a harder task in selecting the performers than they'd had in the earlier trials of the engineers: in those trials they had forty barrels to pick from, so to speak, whereas here the available troupe was small. Everyone knew who the chief performers were, and the audience wanted to see them in the roles and them only.

Yet there was a choice! The most farsighted and determined of those who were doomed did not allow themselves to be arrested. They committed suicide first (Skrypnik, Tomsky, Gamarnik). It was the ones who *wanted to live* who allowed themselves to be arrested. And one could certainly braid a rope from the ones who wanted to live! But even among them some behaved differ-

ently during the interrogations, realized what was happening, turned stubborn, and died silently but at least not shamefully. For some reason, they did not, after all, put on public trial Rudzutak, Postyshev, Yenukidze, Chubar, Kosior, and, for that matter, Krylenko himself, even though their names would have embellished the trials.

They put on trial the most compliant. A selection was made after all.

The men selected were drawn from a lower order, but, on the other hand, the mustached Producer knew each of them very well. He also knew that on the whole they were *weaklings,* and he knew, one by one, the particular weaknesses of each. Therein lay his dark and special talent, his main psychological bent and his life's achievement: to see people's weaknesses on the lowest plane of being.

And the man who seems, in the perspective of time, to have embodied the highest and brightest intelligence of all the disgraced and executed leaders (and to whom Arthur Koestler apparently dedicated his talented inquiry) was N. I. Bukharin. Stalin saw through him, too, at that lowest stratum at which the human being unites with the earth; and Stalin held him in a long death grip, playing with him as a cat plays with a mouse, letting him go just a little, and then catching him again. Bukharin wrote every last word of our entire existing—in other words, nonexistent—Constitution, which is so beautiful to listen to. And he flew about up there, just below the clouds, and thought that he had outplayed Koba: that he had thrust a constitution on him that would compel him to relax the dictatorship. And at that very moment, he himself had already been caught in those jaws.

Bukharin did not like Kamenev and Zinoviev, and way back when they had first been tried, after the murder of Kirov, he had said to people close to him: "Well, so what? That's the kind of people they were; maybe there was something to it. . . ." (That was the classic formula of the philistine in those years: "There was probably something to it. . . . In our country they don't arrest people for nothing." And that was said in 1935 by the leading theoretician of the Party!) He spent the period of the second trial of Kamenev and Zinoviev, in the summer of 1936, hunting in the Tien Shan, and knew nothing about it. He came down from

the mountains to Frunze—and there he read that the death sentence had been imposed on both men, and read the newspaper articles which made clear what annihilating testimony they had given against him. But did he hasten to stop that act of repression? And did he protest to the Party that something monstrous was being done? No, all he did was send Koba a telegram asking him to postpone the execution of Kamenev and Zinoviev so that he, Bukharin, could get there to confront them and prove himself innocent.

It was too late! Koba had enough of the sworn testimony; why did he need living confrontations?

However, they still didn't arrest Bukharin for a long time. He lost his job as editor-in-chief of *Izvestiya* and all his other Party assignments and jobs, and he lived for half a year in his Kremlin apartment—in the Poteshny Palace of Peter the Great—as if in prison. (However, in the autumn he used to go to his dacha—and the Kremlin guards would salute him as though nothing at all had changed.) No one visited him or phoned him any longer. And all during these months he wrote endless letters: "Dear Koba! Dear Koba! Dear Koba!" And he got not one reply.

He was still trying to establish friendly contact with Stalin!

And *Dear Koba,* squinting, was already staging rehearsals. For many long years Koba had been holding tryouts for various roles, and he knew that *Bukharchik* would play his part beautifully. He had, after all, already renounced those of his pupils and supporters who had been arrested and exiled—they were few in number in any case—and had allowed them to be destroyed.[36] He had stood by and allowed his own line of thinking to be wiped out and pilloried before it was fully developed and born. And more recently, while he was still editor-in-chief of *Izvestiya* and a member of the Politburo, he had accepted as legal the execution of Kamenev and Zinoviev. Neither at the top of his lungs nor even in a whisper had he expressed any indignation over that. And yet these had all been tryouts for his own future role.

Way back in the past, when Stalin had threatened to expel him (and all the rest of them) from the Party, Bukharin (like all the rest) had renounced his views in order to remain in the Party. And that, too, had been a tryout for his role. If that was how

36. The only one he defended was Yefim Tseitlin—but not for long.

they acted while still in freedom and still at the height of honor and power, then they could certainly be depended on to follow the script of the play faultlessly when their body, their food, and their sleep were in the hands of the Lubyanka prompters.

And what did Bukharin fear most in those months before his arrest? It is reliably known that above all he feared expulsion from the Party! Being deprived of the Party! Being left alive but outside the Party! And *Dear Koba* had played magnificently on this trait of his (as he had with them all) from the very moment he had himself become the Party. Bukharin (like all the rest of them) did not have his own *individual point of view*. They didn't have their own genuine ideology of opposition, on the strength of which they could step aside and on which they could take their stand. Before they became an opposition, Stalin declared them to be one, and by this move he rendered them powerless. And all their efforts were directed toward staying in the Party. And toward not harming the Party at the same time!

These added up to too many different obligations for them to be independent.

In essence, Bukharin had been allotted the starring role, and nothing was to be overlooked or abridged in the Producer's work with him, in the working of time on him, and in his own getting used to the role. Even sending him to Europe the previous winter to acquire manuscripts by Marx had been essential—not just superficially, for the sake of the whole network of accusations about his establishing contacts, but so that the aimless freedom of life on tour might all the more insistently demand his return to the main stage. And now, beneath black thunderclouds of accusations, came the long, the interminable state of nonarrest, of exhausting housebound lethargy, which ground down the will power of the victim even more effectively than the direct pressure of the Lubyanka. (Nor would the Lubyanka run away either—it, too, would last for a year.)

On one occasion, Bukharin was summoned by Kaganovich, who arranged a confrontation between him and Sokolnikov in the presence of high-ranking Chekists. Sokolnikov gave testimony about "the parallel Rightist Center" (parallel, in other words, to that of the Trotskyites), and about Bukharin's underground activity. Kaganovich conducted the interrogation aggressively

and then ordered Sokolnikov to be taken away. And he said to Bukharin in a friendly tone: "He lies in his teeth, the whore!"

Despite that, the newspapers continued to report the indignation of the masses. Bukharin telephoned the Central Committee. Bukharin wrote letters beginning "Dear Koba," in which he begged that the accusations against him be publicly denied. And then the prosecutor's office published a roundabout declaration: "Objective proofs for the indictment of Bukharin have not been found."

Radek telephoned him in the fall, wanting to see him. Bukharin shunned him: We are both being accused; why add another cloud? But their *Izvestiya* country houses were next to each other, and Radek dropped in on him one evening: "No matter what I may say later on, please know that I am not to blame for anything. And anyway you will come out of it whole: you were not connected with the Trotskyites."

And Bukharin believed he would come out of it whole and that he would not be expelled from the Party. For that would be monstrous! In actuality, he had always been hostile to the Trotskyites: they had put themselves outside the Party and look what had come of it! They had to stick together. Even if they made mistakes, they had to stick together on that too.

At the November demonstration (his farewell to Red Square), he and his wife went to the reviewing stand for guests on his newspaper editor's press card. All at once an armed soldier came up to him. His heart stopped! They were going to do it here? At a time like this? No. The soldier saluted: "Comrade Stalin is surprised at your being here. He asks you to take your place on the mausoleum."

And that's the way they tossed him back and forth from hot to cold for the entire half-year. On December 5 they adopted the Bukharin constitution with fanfare and celebration and named it the Stalinist Constitution for all eternity. At the December Plenum of the Central Committee, they brought in Pyatakov, with his teeth knocked out, and not a bit like himself. Behind his back stood silent Chekists (Yagoda men, and Yagoda, after all, was also being tested and prepared for a role). Pyatakov delivered himself of the most repulsive sort of testimony against Bukharin and Rykov, both of whom were sitting right there

among the leaders. Ordzhonikidze put his hand up to his ear (he was hard of hearing): "See here, are you giving all this testimony *voluntarily?*" (Note that down! Ordzhonikidze will get a bullet of his own!) "Absolutely voluntarily"—and Pyatakov swayed on his feet. And during the recess, Rykov said to Bukharin: "Tomsky had will power. He understood it all back in August, and he ended his own life. While you and I, like fools, have gone on living."

At this point Kaganovich made an angry, condemnatory speech (he wanted so much to believe in Bukharchik's innocence, but he couldn't any longer). And then Molotov. And then Stalin! What a generous heart! What a memory for the good things! "Nonetheless, I consider that Bukharin's guilt has not yet been proven. Perhaps Rykov is guilty, but not Bukharin." (Someone had drawn up charges against Bukharin against his will!)

From cold to hot. That's how will power collapses. That's how to grow used to the role of a ruined hero.

And then they began to bring to his home day after day the records of interrogations: the depositions of young ex-students in the Institute of Red Professors, of Radek, and all the rest of them. And they all provided the gravest proofs of Bukharin's black treason. They took these documents to his home, not as if he were a defendant—oh, by no means! Merely in his position as a member of the Central Committee—merely for his information.

Usually, when he received a new batch of these materials, Bukharin would say to his twenty-two-year-old wife, who only that spring had given him a son: "You read them. I can't." And he would bury his head in his pillow. He had two revolvers at home. (Stalin was giving him time too.) And yet he did not commit suicide.

Is it not clear that he had grown used to his ordained role?

And one more public trial took place. And they shot one more batch of defendants. And yet they continued to be merciful to Bukharin. They had not taken Bukharin.

At the beginning of February, 1937, he decided to go on a hunger strike at home, in order to force the Central Committee to hold a hearing and clear him of the charges against him. He announced it in a letter to "Dear Koba," and he honestly went

through with it too. Then a Plenum of the Central Committee was convened with the following agenda: (1) the crimes of the Rightist *Center;* (2) the anti-Party conduct of Comrade Bukharin, as evidenced by his hunger strike.

Bukharin hesitated. Had he perhaps really insulted the Party in some particular way? Unshaven, thin, wan, already a prisoner in appearance, he dragged himself along to the Plenum. "What on earth were you thinking of?" Dear Koba asked him cordially. "But what was I to do in the face of such accusations? They want to expel me from the Party." Stalin made a wry face at the absurdity: "Come on, now. No one is going to expel you from the Party!"

Bukharin believed him and revived. He willingly assured the Plenum of his repentance, and immediately abandoned his hunger strike. (At home he said: "Come on now, cut me some sausage! Koba said they wouldn't expel me.") But in the course of the Plenum, Kaganovich and Molotov (impudent fellows they were, indeed!—paid no attention to Stalin's opinion!)[37] both called Bukharin a Fascist hireling and demanded that he be shot.

And once again Bukharin's spirits fell, and in his last days he began to compose his "Letter to the Future Central Committee." Committed to memory and thereby preserved, it recently became known to the whole world. However, it did not shake the world to its foundations.[38] For what were the last words this brilliant theoretician decided to hand down to future generations? Just one more cry of anguish and a plea to be restored to the Party. (He paid dearly in shame for that devotion!) And one more affirmation that he "fully approved" everything that had happened up to and including 1937. And that included not only all the previous jeeringly mocking trials, but also all the foul-smelling waves of our great prison sewage disposal system.

And that is how he himself certified that he, too, deserved to plunge into those waves.

So, at long last, he had matured to the point of being turned over to the prompters and the assistant producers—this muscular man, this hunter and wrestler! (In playful tussles in the presence of the Central Committee, how many times had he landed Stalin

37. See what a wealth of information we are deprived of because we're protecting Molotov's noble old age.

38. Nor did it shake the "Future Central Committee" either.

flat on his back! And this, too, was probably something Koba couldn't forgive him.)

And in the case of one so fully prepared, so demolished, that no torture was called for, how was his position any stronger than that of Yakubovich in 1931? How could he not be susceptible to the same two arguments? He was in fact much weaker, because Yakubovich longed for death, and Bukharin dreaded it.

There remained an easy dialogue with Vyshinsky along set lines:

"Is it true that every opposition to the Party is a struggle against the Party?" "In general it is, factually it is." "But a struggle against the Party cannot help but grow into a war against the Party." "According to the logic of things—yes, it must." "And that means that in the end, given the existence of oppositionist beliefs, any foul deeds whatever might be perpetrated against the Party [espionage, murder, sellout of the Motherland]?" "But wait a minute, none were actually committed." "But they *could have been?*" "Well, theoretically speaking." (Those are your theoreticians for you!) "But for us the highest of all interests are those of the Party?" "Yes, of course, of course!" "So you see, only a very fine distinction separates us. We are required to concretize the eventuality: in the interest of discrediting for the future any idea of opposition, we are required to accept as *having taken place* what *could* only theoretically have taken place. After all, it *could* have, couldn't it?" "It could have." "And so it is necessary to recognize as actual what was possible; that's all. It's a small philosophical transition. Are we in agreement? . . . Yes, and one thing more, and it's not for me to explain to you, but if you retreat and say something different during the trial, you understand that it will only play into the hands of the world bourgeoisie and will only do the Party harm. Well, and it's clear that in that case you yourself will not die an easy death. But if everything goes off all right, we will, of course, allow you to go on living. We'll send you in secret to the island of Monte Cristo, and you can work on the economics of socialism there." "But in previous trials, as I understand it, you did shoot them all?" "But what comparison is there between *you* and *them!* And then, we also left many of them alive too. They were shot only in the newspapers."

And so perhaps there isn't any insoluble riddle?

It was all that same invincible theme song, persisting with only minor variations through so many different trials: *"After all, we and you are Communists!* How could you have gotten off the track and come out against us? Repent! After all, you and we together—is *us!*"

Historical comprehension ripens slowly in a society. And when it does ripen, it is so simple. Neither in 1922, nor in 1924, nor in 1937 were the defendants able to hang onto their own point of view so firmly that they could raise their heads and shout, in reply to that bewitching and anesthetizing melody:

"No, we are not revolutionaries *with you!* No, we are not Russians *with you!* No, we are not Communists *with you!*"

It would seem that if only that kind of shout had been raised, all the stage sets would have collapsed, the plaster masks would have fallen off, the Producer would have fled down the backstairs, and the prompters would have sneaked off into their ratholes. And out of doors it would have been, say, 1967!

■

But even the most superbly successful of these theatrical productions was expensive and troublesome. And Stalin decided not to use open trials any longer.

Or rather in 1937 he probably did have a plan for holding public trials on a wide scale in the *local districts*—so the black soul of the opposition would be made visible to the *masses.* But he couldn't find producers who were good enough. It wasn't practical to prepare things so carefully, and the mental processes of the accused weren't so complex, and Stalin only got into a mess, although very few people know about it. The whole plan broke down after a few trials, and was abandoned.

It's appropriate here to describe one such trial—the Kady case, detailed reports of which the Ivanovo provincial newspapers published initially.

At the end of 1934, a new local administrative district was created in the remote wilds of Ivanovo Province at the point where it joined Kostroma and Nizhni Novgorod Provinces, and its center was situated in the ancient, slow-moving village of Kady. New leaders were sent there from various localities, and they

made one another's acquaintance right in Kady. There they found a remote, sad, impoverished region, badly in need of money, machines, and intelligent economic management, but, instead, starved by grain procurements. It happened that Fyodor Ivanovich Smirnov, the First Secretary of the District Party Committee, was a man with a strong sense of justice; Stavrov, the head of the District Agricultural Department, was a peasant through and through, one of those peasants known as the intensivniki—in other words, the hard-working, zealous, and literate peasants who in the twenties had run their farms on a scientific basis, for which they were at that time rewarded by the Soviet government, since it had not yet been decided that all these intensivniki must be destroyed. Because Stavrov had entered the Party he had survived the liquidation of the kulaks. (And maybe he even took part in the liquidation of the kulaks?) These men tried to do something for the peasants in their new district, but directives kept pouring down from above and each one ran counter to some initiative of theirs; it was as if, up there, they were busy thinking up what they could do to make things worse and more desperate for the peasants. And at one point the leaders in Kady wrote the province leadership that it was necessary to *lower* the plan for procurement of breadgrains because the district couldn't fulfill the plan without becoming impoverished well below the danger point. One has to recall the situation in the thirties (and maybe not only the thirties?) to realize what sacrilege against the plan and what rebellion against the government this represented! But, in accordance with then current style, measures were not taken directly from above, but were left to local initiative. When Smirnov was on vacation, his deputy, Vasily Fyodorovich Romanov, the Second Secretary, arranged to have a resolution passed by the District Party Committee: "The successes of the district would have been even more brilliant [?] if it were not for the Trotskyite Stavrov." This set in motion the "individual case" of Stavrov. (An interesting approach: *Divide* and rule! For the time being, Smirnov was merely to be frightened, neutralized, and compelled to retreat; there would be time enough later on to get to him. And this, on a small scale, was precisely the Stalinist tactic in the Central Committee.) At stormy Party meetings, however, it became clear that Stavrov was about as much of a Trotskyite as he was a Jesuit. The

head of the District Consumer Cooperatives, Vasily Grigoryevich Vlasov, a man with a ragtag, haphazard education but one of those native talents others are so surprised to find among Russians, a born retail trade executive, eloquent, adroit in an argument, who could get fired to red heat about anything he believed to be right, tried to persuade the Party meeting to *expel* Romanov from the Party for slander. And they actually did give Romanov an official Party rebuke! Romanov's last words in this dispute were typical of this kind of person, demonstrating his assurance in regard to the general situation: "Even though they proved Stavrov was not a Trotskyite, *nonetheless* I am sure he is a Trotskyite. *The Party will investigate,* and it will also investigate the rebuke to me." And the Party did investigate: the District NKVD arrested Stavrov almost immediately, and one month later they also arrested Univer, the Chairman of the District Executive Committee and an Estonian. And Romanov took over Univer's job as Chairman of the District Executive Committee. Stavrov was taken to the Provincial NKVD, where he confessed he was a Trotskyite, that he had acted in coalition with the SR's all his life, that he was a member of an underground *rightist* organization in his district (this is a bouquet worthy of the times, the only thing missing being a connection with the Entente). Perhaps he never really did confess these things, but no one is ever going to know, since he died from torture during interrogation in the internal prison of the Ivanovo NKVD. The pages of his deposition were there in full. Soon afterward, they arrested Smirnov, the secretary of the District Party Committee, as the head of the supposed rightist organization; and Saburov, the head of the District Financial Department, and someone else as well.

Of interest is the way in which Vlasov's fate was decided. He had only recently demanded the expulsion from the Party of Romanov, now the new Chairman of the District Executive Committee. He had also fatally offended Rusov, the district prosecutor, as we have already reported in Chapter 4, above. He had offended N. I. Krylov, the Chairman of the District NKVD, by protecting two of his energetic and resourceful executives from being arrested for supposed wrecking—both of them had black marks on their records because of their social origins. (Vlasov always hired all kinds of "former" people for his work—because they mastered

the business effectively and, in addition, tried hard; people promoted from the ranks of the proletariat knew nothing and, more importantly, didn't want to know anything.) Nonetheless the NKVD was prepared to make its peace with the trade cooperative! Sorokin, the Deputy Chairman of the District NKVD, came in person to see Vlasov with a peace proposal: to give the NKVD 700 rubles' worth of materials without charging them for it (and later on we will somehow write it off). (The ragpickers! And that was two months' wages for Vlasov, who had never taken anything illegally for himself.) "And if you don't give it to us, you are going to regret it." Vlasov kicked him out: "How do you dare offer me, a Communist, a deal like that?" The very next day Krylóv paid a call on the District Consumer Cooperative, this time as the representative of the District Committee of the Party. (This masquerade, like all these tricks, was in the spirit of 1937.) And this time he *ordered* the convening of a Party meeting; the agenda: "On the wrecking activities of Smirnov and Univer in the Consumers' Cooperatives," the report to be delivered by Comrade Vlasov. Well, now, that's a gem of a trick for you! No one at that point was making charges against Vlasov. But it would be quite enough for him to say two little words about the wrecking activities of the former secretary of the District Party Committee in his, Vlasov's, field, and the NKVD would interrupt: "And where were *you?* Why didn't you come to us in time?" In a situation of this sort many others would have lost their heads and allowed themselves to be trapped. But not Vlasov! He immediately replied: "I won't make the report! Let Krylov make the report—after all, he arrested Smirnov and Univer and is handling their case." Krylov refused: "I'm not familiar with the evidence." Vlasov replied: "If even *you* aren't familiar with the evidence, that means they were arrested without cause." So the Party meeting simply didn't take place. But how often did people dare to defend themselves? (We will not have a complete picture of the atmosphere of 1937 if we lose sight of the fact that there were still strong-willed people capable of difficult decisions, and if we fail to recall that late that night T., the senior bookkeeper of the District Consumer Cooperative, and his deputy N. came to Vlasov's office with 10,000 rubles: "Vasily Grigoryevich! Get out of town tonight! Don't wait for tomorrow. Otherwise you are

finished!" But Vlasov thought it did not befit a Communist to run away.) The next morning there was a nasty article in the district paper on the work of the District Consumer Cooperative. (One has to point out that in 1937 the *press* always played hand in glove with the NKVD.) By evening Vlasov had been asked to give the District Party Committee an accounting of his own work. (Every step of the way, this was how things were in the entire Soviet Union.)

This was 1937, the second year of the so-called "Mikoyan prosperity" in Moscow and other big cities. And even today, in the reminiscences of journalists and writers, one gets the impression that at the time there was already plenty of everything. This concept seems to have gone down in history, and there is a danger of its staying there. And yet, in November, 1936, two years after the abolition of bread rationing, a secret directive was published in Ivanovo Province (and in other provinces) *prohibiting the sale of flour*. In those years many housewives in small towns, and particularly in villages, still used to bake their own bread. Prohibiting the sale of flour meant: Do not eat bread! In the district center of Kady, long bread lines formed such as had never before been seen. (However, they attacked that problem, too, by forbidding the baking of black bread in district centers, permitting only expensive white bread to be baked.) The only bakery in the whole Kady District was the one in the district center, and people began to pour into the center from the villages to get black bread. The warehouses of the District Consumer Cooperative had flour, but the two parallel prohibitions blocked off all avenues by which it could be made available to the public! Vlasov, however, managed to find a way out of the impasse, and despite the clever government rulings he kept the district fed for a whole year: he went out to the collective farms and got eight of them to agree to set up public bakeries in empty "kulak" huts (in other words, they would simply bring in firewood and set the women to baking in ordinary Russian peasant ovens, but, mind you, ovens which were now socialized, publicly not privately owned). The District Consumer Cooperative would undertake to supply them with flour. There is eternal simplicity to a solution once it has been discovered! Without building any bakeries (for which he had no funds), Vlasov set them up in one day. Without carrying on a

trade in flour, he released flour from the warehouse continuously and proceeded to order more from the provincial center. Without selling black bread in the district center, he gave the district black bread. Yes, he did not violate the letter of the instructions, but he violated their *spirit*—for their essence was to compel a reduction in flour consumption by starving the people. And so, of course, there were good grounds for *criticizing* him at the District Party Committee.

After that criticism he remained free overnight and was arrested the next morning. He was a tough little bantam rooster. He was short, and he always carried his head slightly thrown back, with a touch of aggressiveness. He tried to avoid surrendering his Party membership card, because no decision expelling him from the Party had been reached at the District Party Committee the night before. He also refused to give up his identification card as a deputy of the district soviet, since he had been elected by the people, and the District Executive Committee had not taken any decision depriving him of his deputy's immunity. But the police did not appreciate such formalities and overpowered him, and took them away by main force. They took him from the District Consumer Cooperative down the main street of Kady in broad daylight, and his young merchandise manager, a Komsomol member, saw him from the window of the District Party Committee headquarters. At that time not everyone, especially in the villages, because of their naïveté, had learned to keep quiet about what they thought. The merchandise manager shouted: "Look at those bastards! Now they've taken away my boss too!" Right then and there, without leaving the room, they expelled him from both the District Party Committee and from the Komsomol, and he slid down the well-known pathway into the bottomless pit.

Vlasov was arrested very late in comparison with the others who were charged in the same case. The case had been nearly completed without him, and it was in process of being set up as an open trial. They took him to the Ivanovo NKVD Internal Prison, but, since he was the last to be involved, he was not subjected to any heavy pressure. He was interrogated twice. There was no supporting testimony from witnesses. And the file of his interrogation was filled with summary reports of the District Consumer Cooperative and clips from the district newspaper. Vlasov

was charged with: (1) initiating bread lines; (2) having an inadequate minimum assortment of merchandise (just as though the unavailable merchandise existed somewhere else and someone had offered it to Kady); (3) procuring a surplus of salt (but this was the obligatory "mobilization" reserve: ever since ancient times people in Russia have been afraid of being without salt in the event of war).

At the end of September, the defendants were brought to Kady for public trial. It was not a short trip. (Remember how cheap the OSO's and the closed courts were!) From Ivanovo to Kineshma they went in a Stolypin railway car; then seventy miles from Kineshma to Kady in automobiles. There were more than ten cars, an unusual file along an old, deserted road, and one that aroused astonishment, fear, and the expectation of war in the villages. Klyugin, the Chief of the Special Secret Department of the Provincial NKVD for Counter-Revolutionary Organizations, was responsible for the faultless organization of the whole trial and for terrifying the public with it. Their convoy consisted of forty guards from the reserves of the mounted police, and every day from September 24 to 27, with swords unsheathed and Naguan revolvers at the ready, they took the prisoners from the District NKVD to the still unfinished club building and back, through the village where they had until recently been the government. Windows had already been installed in the club, but the stage had not yet been finished. There was no electricity. There was no electricity in Kady at all. After nightfall the court met by the light of kerosene lamps. The spectators were brought in from the collective farms in rotation. And all Kady crowded in as well. Not only did they sit on window sills and benches, but they stood packed in the aisles, seven hundred of them at a time. (Russians have always loved spectacles.) The forward benches were regularly reserved for Communists to provide the court with dependable support.

A Special Assize of the provincial court had been constituted, consisting of Deputy Chairman of the Provincial Court Shubin, who presided, and members Biche and Zaozerov. The provincial prosecutor Karasik, a graduate of Dorpat University, was in charge of the prosecution. And even though all the accused declined defense lawyers, a government lawyer was forced on them

so that the case wouldn't be left without a prosecutor. The formal indictment, solemn, menacing, and lengthy, came down in essence to the charge that an underground Rightist Bukharinite group had existed in Kady District, which had been formed in Ivanovo (in other words, you could expect arrests in Ivanovo too), and had as its purpose the overthrow by wrecking of the Soviet government in the village of Kady (and this was about the remotest boondock in all Russia the *rightists* could have found for a starting point!).

The prosecutor petitioned the court to have Stavrov's testimony, given before his death in prison, read to the court and accepted as evidence. In fact, the whole charge against the group was based on Stavrov's evidence. The court agreed to include the testimony of the deceased, just as if he were alive. (With the advantage, however, that none of the defendants could refute it.)

But darkest Kady did not appreciate these scholarly fine points. It waited to see what came next. The testimony of Stavrov, who had been killed under interrogation, was read to the court and once again became part of the record. The questioning of the defendants began—and immediately there was chaos. *All* of them *repudiated* the testimony they had given during the interrogation.

It is not clear how, in such an event, things would have been arranged in the October Hall of the House of the Unions in Moscow—but here, at any rate, it was decided shamelessly to continue. The judge rebuked the defendants: How could you have given different testimony during the interrogation? Univer, very weak, replied in a barely audible voice: "As a Communist I cannot, in a public trial, describe the interrogation methods of the NKVD." (Now there was a model for the Bukharin trial! Now that's what keeps them together! More than anything else, they are worried that people might think ill of the Party. Their judges had long since stopped worrying about that.)

During the recess, Klyugin visited the cells of the defendants. He said to Vlasov: "You've heard how Smirnov and Univer played the whore, the bastards? You've got to admit your guilt and tell the whole truth!" "The truth and nothing but the truth," willingly agreed Vlasov, who had not yet weakened. "The truth and nothing but the truth that you are every bit as bad as the German Fascists!" Klyugin flew into a rage: "Listen here, you

whore, you'll pay with your blood!"[39] From that moment Vlasov was pushed forward from a back seat among the defendants to a leading role in the trial—as the *ideological leader* of the group.

The crowd jamming the aisles grew interested whenever the court fearlessly broke into questions about bread lines—about things that touched everyone present to the quick. (And, of course, bread had been put on unrestricted sale just before the trial, and there were no bread lines that day.) A question to the accused Smirnov: "Did you know about the bread lines in the district?" "Yes, of course. They stretched from the store itself right up to the building of the District Party Committee." "And what did you do about them?" Notwithstanding the tortures he had endured, Smirnov had preserved his resounding voice and tranquil righteousness. This broad-shouldered man with a simple face and light-brown hair answered slowly, and the whole hall heard every word he said: "Since all appeals to organizations in the provincial capital had failed, I instructed Vlasov to write a report to Comrade Stalin." "And why didn't you write it?" (They hadn't yet known about it! They had certainly missed that one!) "We did write it, and I sent it by courier directly to the Central Committee, bypassing the provincial leaders. A copy was kept in the District Committee files."

The whole courtroom held its breath. The court itself was in a commotion. They shouldn't have continued questioning, but nonetheless someone asked: "And what happened?"

And, indeed, that question was on the lips of everyone in the courtroom: "What happened?"

Smirnov did not sob, did not groan over the death of his ideal (and that's what was missing in the Moscow trials!). He replied loudly and calmly:

"Nothing. *There was no answer.*"

And his tired voice seemed to say: Well, that, in fact, was just what I expected.

There was no answer. From the Father and Teacher there was no answer! The public trial had already reached its zenith! It had already shown the masses the black heart of the Cannibal! And

39. Your own blood, too, is going to flow soon, Klyugin! Caught in the Yezhov gang of gaybisty, Klyugin will have his throat cut by the stool pigeon Gubaidulin.

the trial could have been called off right then and there. But, oh no, they didn't have sense enough for that, or tact enough for that, and they kept rubbing away at the befouled spot for three more days.

The prosecutor raised a hue and cry: Double-dealing! That's what it was. They engaged in wrecking with one hand and with the other they dared write Comrade Stalin. And they even expected a reply from him. Let the defendant Vlasov tell us how he pulled off such a nightmarish piece of wrecking that he stopped the sale of flour and the baking of rye bread in the district center.

Vlasov, the bantam rooster, didn't have to be asked to rise—he had already jumped up, and he shouted resoundingly through the hall:

"I agree to give a full answer to the court, but on condition that you, the prosecutor, Karasik, leave the accuser's rostrum and sit down here next to me!" It was incomprehensible. Noise, shouting. Call them to order! What was going on?

Having gotten the floor with this maneuver, Vlasov explained willingly.

"The prohibitions on selling flour and baking rye bread were instituted by a decree of the Provincial Executive Committee. One of the permanent members of its presidium is Provincial Prosecutor Karasik. If that's wrecking, then why didn't you veto it as prosecutor? That means you were a wrecker even before I was!"

The prosecutor choked. It was a swift, well-placed blow. The court was also at a loss. The judge mumbled.

"If necessary [?] we will try the prosecutor too. But today we are trying you."

(Two truths: it all depends on your rank.)

"I demand that he be removed from the prosecutor's rostrum," insisted the indefatigable, irrepressible Vlasov.

Recess.

Now, in terms of indoctrinating the masses, just what significance could such a trial have?

But they kept on and on. After questioning the defendants they began to question the witnesses. The bookkeeper N.

"What do you know about Vlasov's wrecking activities?"

"Nothing."

"How can that be?"

"I was in the witnesses' room and I didn't hear what was said in here."

"You don't have to hear! Many documents passed through your hands. You couldn't help but know."

"The documents were all in proper order."

"But here is a stack of district newspapers, and even there they were writing about Vlasov's wrecking activities. And you claim you don't know anything?"

"Well, go ask the people who wrote the articles."

Then there was the manager of the bread store.

"Tell me, does the Soviet government have much bread?"

(Well, now! Just how could you answer that? Who was going to say: "I didn't count it"?)

"A lot."

"Why are there bread lines at your store?"

"I don't know."

"Who was in charge?"

"I don't know."

"What do you mean, you don't know? Who was in charge of your store?"

"Vasily Grigoryevich."

"What the devil! What do you mean calling him Vasily Grigoryevich? Defendant Vlasov! That means he was in charge."

The witness fell silent.

The judge of the court dictated to the stenographer: "The answer: 'As a consequence of the wrecking activity of Vlasov, bread lines resulted, notwithstanding the Soviet government's enormous stocks of bread.' "

Repressing his own fears, the prosecutor delivered a long and angry speech. The defense lawyer for the most part defended only himself, emphasizing that the interests of the Motherland were as dear to him as they were to any honest citizen.

In his final words to the court, Smirnov asked for nothing and expressed no repentance for anything. Insofar as we can reconstruct it now, he was a firm person and too forthright to have lasted through 1937.

When Saburov begged that his life be spared—"not for me, but for my little children"—Vlasov, out of vexation, pulled him back by the jacket: "You're a fool."

Vlasov himself did not fail to take advantage of his last chance to talk back impudently.

"I consider you not a court but actors pretending to be a court in a stage farce where roles have already been written for you. You are engaged in a repulsive provocation on the part of the NKVD. You are going to sentence me to be shot no matter what I say. I believe one thing only: the time will come when you will be here in my place."[40]

The court spent from 7 P.M. to 1 A.M. composing the verdict, and all the while the kerosene lamps were burning in the hall, and the defendants sat beneath drawn sabers, and there was a hum of conversation among the spectators who had not left.

And just as it took them a long time to compose the verdict, it took them a long time to read it, piling up on top of one another all kinds of fantastic wrecking activities, contacts, and plans. Smirnov, Univer, Saburov, and Vlasov were sentenced to be shot; two others to ten years; one to eight years. In addition, the verdict of the court led to the exposure of an additional wrecking organization in the Komsomol in Kady (whose members were, of course, immediately arrested. Remember the young merchandise manager?). And of a center of underground organizations in Ivanovo, which was, of course, in its turn, subordinate to Moscow. (One more nail in Bukharin's coffin.)

After the solemn words "To be shot!" the judges paused for applause. But the mood in the hall was so gloomy, with the sighs and tears of people who had no connection with the defendants, and the screams and swooning of their relatives, that no applause was to be heard even from the first two benches, where the Party members were sitting. This, indeed, was totally improper. "Oh, good Lord, what have you done?" someone in the hall shouted at the members of the court. Univer's wife dissolved in tears. In the half-darkness, the crowd began to stir. Vlasov shouted at the front benches:

"Come on, you bastards, why aren't you clapping? Some Communists you are!"

The political commissar of the guards platoon ran up to him and shoved his revolver in his face. Vlasov reached out to grab the revolver, but a policeman ran up and pushed back his political commissar, who had been guilty of a blunder. The chief

40. Generally speaking, he was wrong just on this one point.

of the convoy gave the command: "Arms at the ready!" And thirty police carbines and the pistols of the local NKVD men were aimed at the defendants and at the crowd. (It seemed at the time as though the crowd would rush forward to free the defendants.)

The hall was lit only by a few kerosene lamps, and the semi-darkness heightened the general confusion and fear. The crowd, finally convinced, not so much by the trial as by the carbines now leveled at it, pushed in a panic against the doors and windows. The wood cracked and broke; glass tinkled. Univer's wife, in a dead faint, was almost trampled to death and was left lying beneath the chairs until morning.

And there never was any applause.[41]

And not only couldn't the condemned prisoners be shot then and there, but they had to be kept under even stricter guard, because now they really had nothing at all to lose, and they had to be taken to the provincial capital for execution.

They managed to cope with the first problem—sending them off by night to the NKVD along the main street—by having each condemned man guarded by five men. One of the guards carried a lantern. One went ahead with a pistol at the ready. Two held the condemned prisoner by the arms and kept their pistols in their free hands. The fifth brought up the rear, with his pistol pointed at the condemned man's back.

The rest of the police were ranged in formation in order to prevent any attack by the crowd.

Every reasonable man will now agree that the NKVD could never have carried out its great assignment if they had fussed about with open trials.

And that is why public political trials never really put down roots in our country.

41. One little note on eight-year-old Zoya Vlasova. She loved her father intensely. She could no longer go to school. (They teased her: "Your papa is a wrecker!" She would get in a fight: "My papa is good!") She lived only one year after the trial. Up to then she had never been ill. During that year *she did not once smile;* she went about with head hung low, and the old women prophesied: "She keeps looking at the earth; she is going to die soon." She died of inflammation of the brain, and as she was dying she kept calling out: "Where is my papa? Give me my papa!" When we count up the millions of those who perished in the camps, we forget to multiply them by two, by three.

Chapter 11

■

The Supreme Measure

Capital punishment has had an up-and-down history in Russia. In the Code of the Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich Romanov there were fifty crimes for which capital punishment could be imposed. By the time of the Military Statutes of Peter the Great there were two hundred. Yet the Empress Elizabeth, while she did not repeal those laws authorizing capital punishment, never once resorted to it. They say that when she ascended the throne she swore an oath never to execute anyone—and for all twenty years of her reign she kept that oath. She fought the Seven Years' War! Yet she still got along without capital punishment. It was an astounding record in the mid-eighteenth century—fifty years before the guillotine of the Jacobins. True, we have taught ourselves to ridicule all our past; we never acknowledge a good deed or a good intention in our history. And one can very easily blacken Elizabeth's reputation too; she replaced capital punishment with flogging with the knout; tearing out nostrils; branding with the word "thief"; and eternal exile in Siberia. But let us also say something on behalf of the Empress: how could she have changed things more radically than she did in contravention of the social concepts of her time? And perhaps the prisoner condemned to death today would voluntarily consent to that whole complex of punishments if only the sun would continue to shine on him; but we, in our humanitarianism, don't offer him that chance. And perhaps the reader will come to feel in the course of this book that twenty

or even ten years in our camps are harder to bear than were the punishments of Elizabeth?

In today's terms, Elizabeth had a universally human point of view on all this, while the Empress Catherine the Great had, on the contrary, a class point of view (which was consequently more correct). Not to execute anyone at all seemed to her appalling and indefensible. She found capital punishment entirely appropriate to defending herself, her throne, and her system—in other words, in political cases, such as those of Mirovich, the Moscow plague mutiny, and Pugachev. But for *habitual criminals,* for *nonpolitical offenders,* why not consider capital punishment abolished?

Under Paul, the abolition of capital punishment was confirmed. (Despite his many wars, there were no military tribunals attached to military units.) And during the whole long reign of Alexander I, capital punishment was introduced only for war crimes that took place during a campaign (1812). (Right at this point, some people will say to us: What about deaths from running the gantlet? Yes, indeed, there were, of course, hidden executions—for that matter, one can literally drive a person to death with a trade-union meeting!) But the yielding up of one's God-given life because others, sitting in judgment, have so voted simply did not take place in our country even for *crimes* of state for an entire half-century—from Pugachev to the Decembrists.

The blood of the five Decembrists whetted the appetite of our state. From then on, execution for crimes of state was no longer prohibited nor was it forgotten, right up to the February Revolution in 1917. It was confirmed by the Statutes of 1845 and 1904, and further reinforced by the criminal statutes of the army and navy.

And how many people were executed in Russia during that period? We have already, in Chapter 8 above, cited the figures given by liberal leaders of 1905–1907. Let us add to them the verified figures of N. S. Tagantsev, the expert on Russian criminal law.[1] Up until 1905, the death penalty was an exceptional measure in Russia. For a period of thirty years—from 1876 to 1904 (the period of the Narodnaya Volya revolutionaries and the use of terrorism—a terrorism which did not consist merely

1. N. S. Tagantsev, *Smertnaya Kazn (Capital Punishment)*, St. Petersburg, 1913.

of *intentions* murmured in the kitchen of a communal apartment —a period of mass strikes and peasant revolts; the period when the parties of the future revolution were created and grew in strength)—486 people were executed; in other words, about seventeen people per year for the whole country. (This figure includes executions of ordinary, nonpolitical criminals!)[2] During the years of the first revolution (1905) and its suppression, the number of executions rocketed upward, astounding Russian imaginations, calling forth tears from Tolstoi and indignation from Korolenko and many, many others: from 1905 through 1908 about 2,200 persons were executed—forty-five a month. This, as Tagantsev said, was an *epidemic of executions*. It came to an abrupt end.

When the Provisional Government came to power, it abolished capital punishment entirely. In July, 1917, however, it was reinstated in the active army and front-line areas for military crimes, murder, rape, assault, and pillage (very widespread in those areas at that time). This was one of the most unpopular of the measures which destroyed the Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks' slogan before the Bolshevik coup d'état was: "Down with capital punishment, reinstated by Kerensky!"

A story has come down to us that on the night of October 25–26 a discussion arose in Smolny as to whether one of the first decrees shouldn't be the abolition of capital punishment in perpetuity—whereupon Lenin justly ridiculed the idealism of his comrades. He, at any rate, knew that without capital punishment there would be no movement whatever in the direction of the new society. However, in forming a coalition government with the Left SR's, he gave in to their faulty concepts, and on October 28, 1917, capital punishment was abolished. Nothing good, of course, could come from that "goody-goody" position. (Yes, and how did they get rid of it? At the beginning of 1918, Trotsky ordered that Aleksei Shchastny, a newly appointed admiral, be brought to trial because he had refused to scuttle the Baltic Fleet. Karklin, the Chairman of the Verkhtrib, quickly sentenced him in broken Russian: "To be shot within twenty-four hours." There was a stir in the hall: But it has been abolished! Prosecutor

2. Thirteen people were executed in Schlüsselburg from 1884 to 1906. An awesome total—for Switzerland perhaps!

Krylenko explained: "What are you worrying about? Executions have been abolished. But Shchastny is not being executed; he is being shot." And they did shoot him.)

If we are to judge by official documents, capital punishment was restored in all its force in June, 1918. No, it was not "restored"; instead, a *new* era of executions was inaugurated. If one takes the view that Latsis[3] is not deliberately understating the real figures but simply lacks complete information, and that the Revtribunals carried on approximately the same amount of judicial work as the Cheka performed in an extrajudicial way, one concludes that in the twenty central provinces of Russia in a period of sixteen months (June, 1918, to October, 1919) more than sixteen thousand persons were shot, which is to say *more than one thousand a month.*[4] (This, incidentally, is when they shot both Khrustalev-Nosar, the Chairman of the 1905 St. Petersburg Soviet—the first Russian soviet—and the artist who designed the legendary uniform worn by the Red Army throughout the Civil War.)

However, it may not even have been these individual executions, with or without formally pronounced death sentences, which added up to thousands and inaugurated the new era of executions in 1918 that stunned and froze Russia. Still more terrible to us was the practice—initially followed by both warring sides and, later, by the victors only—of *sinking barges* loaded with uncounted, unregistered hundreds, unidentified even by a roll call. (Naval officers in the Gulf of Finland, in the White, Caspian, and Black seas, and, as late as 1920, hostages in Lake Baikal.) This is outside the scope of our narrow history of courts and trials, but it belongs to the history of *morals,* which is where everything else originates as well. In all our centuries, from the first Ryurik on, had there ever been a period of such cruelties and so much killing as during the post-October Civil War?

We would omit from view one of the characteristic ups-and-downs of the Russian capital-punishment story if we neglected to mention that capital punishment was abolished in January,

3. Latsis, *Dva Goda Borby na Vnutrennom Fronte,* p. 75.

4. Now that we have started to make comparisons, here is another: during the eighty years of the Inquisition's peak effort (1420 to 1498), in all of Spain ten thousand persons were condemned to be burned to death at the stake—in other words, about ten a month.

1920. Yes, indeed! And some students of the subject might conceivably be at a loss to interpret the credulity and helplessness of a dictatorship that deprived itself of its avenging sword when Denikin was still in the Kuban, Wrangel still in the Crimea, and the Polish cavalry were saddling up for a campaign. But, in the first place, this decree was quite sensible: *it did not extend to the decisions of military tribunals,* but applied only to extrajudicial actions of the Cheka and the decisions of tribunals in the rear. In the second place, the way was *prepared* for it by first *cleaning out the prisons* by the wholesale execution of prisoners who might otherwise have come "under the decree." And, in the third place, it was in effect for a brief period—four months. (It lasted only until the prisons had filled up again.) By a decree of May 28, 1920, capital punishment was restored to the Cheka.

The Revolution had hastened to rename everything, so that everything would seem new. Thus the death penalty was rechristened "the supreme measure"—no longer a "punishment" but a means of *social defense.* From the groundwork of the criminal legislation of 1924 it is clear that the supreme measure was introduced only *temporarily, pending its total abolition by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee.*

And in 1927 they actually did begin to *abolish* it. It was retained *solely* for crimes against the state and the army—Article 58 and military crimes—and, true, for banditry also. (But the broad political interpretation of "banditry" was as well known then as it is now: from a Central Asian "Basmach," right up to a Lithuanian forest guerrilla, every armed nationalist who doesn't agree with the central government is a "bandit," and how could one possibly get along without that article? Similarly, any participant in a camp rebellion and any participant in an urban rebellion is also a "bandit.") But where articles protecting private individuals were concerned, capital punishment was abolished to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Revolution.

And for the fifteenth anniversary, the law of *Seven-eighths* was added to the roster of capital punishment—that law so vitally important to advancing socialism, which guaranteed the Soviet subject a bullet for each crumb stolen from the state's table.

As always happens at the start, they hurried to apply this

law in 1932–1933 and shot people with special ferocity. In this time of *peace* in December, 1932 (while Kirov was still alive), *at one time 265 condemned prisoners* were *awaiting* execution in Leningrad's Kresty Prison alone.[5] And during the whole year, it would certainly seem that more than a thousand were shot in Kresty alone.

And what kind of evildoers were these condemned men? Where did so many plotters and troublemakers come from? Among them, for example, were six collective farmers from nearby Tsarskoye Selo who were guilty of the following crime: After they had finished mowing the collective farm with their own hands, they had gone back and mowed a second time along the hummocks to get a little hay for their own cows. The All-Russian Central Executive Committee *refused to pardon all six of these peasants, and the sentence of execution was carried out.*

What cruel and evil Saltychikha, what utterly repulsive and infamous serf-owner would have *killed* six peasants for their miserable little clippings of hay? If one had dared to beat them with birch switches even once, we would know about it and read about it in school and curse that name.[6] But now, heave the corpses into the water, and pretty soon the surface is all smooth again and no one's the wiser. And one must cherish the hope that someday documents will confirm the report of my witness, who is still alive. Even if Stalin had killed no others, I believe he deserved to be drawn and quartered just for the lives of those six Tsarskoye Selo peasants! And yet they still dare shriek at us (from Peking, from Tirana, from Tbilisi, yes, and plenty of big-bellies in the Moscow suburbs are doing it too): "How could you dare expose him?" "How could you dare disturb his great shade?" "Stalin belongs to the world Communist movement!" But in my opinion all he belongs to is the Criminal Code. "The peoples of all the world remember him as a friend." But not those on whose backs he rode, whom he slashed with his knout.

5. Testimony of B., who brought food to the cells of the prisoners condemned to be shot.

6. What isn't known in our schools is the fact that Saltychikha, by a verdict of her own peers, was imprisoned for eleven years in the subterranean crypt of the Ivanovsky Monastery in Moscow for the atrocities inflicted on her serfs. (Prugavin, *Monastyrskiye Tyurmy* [*Monastery Prisons*], Posrednik Publishers, p. 39.)

However, let us return to being dispassionate and impartial once more. Of course, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee would certainly have "completely abolished" the supreme measure, as promised, but unfortunately what happened was that in 1936 the Father and Teacher "completely abolished" the All-Russian Central Executive Committee itself. And the *Supreme Soviet* that succeeded it had an eighteenth-century ring. "The supreme measure" became a *punishment* once again, and ceased to be some kind of incomprehensible "social defense." Even to the Stalinist ear the executions of 1937–1938 could hardly fit into any framework of "defense."

What legal expert, what criminal historian, will provide us with verified statistics for those 1937–1938 executions? Where is that *Special Archive* we might be able to penetrate in order to read the figures? There is none. There is none and there never will be any. Therefore we dare report only those figures mentioned in rumors that were quite fresh in 1939–1940, when they were drifting around under the Butyrki arches, having emanated from the high- and middle-ranking Yezhov men of the NKVD who had been arrested and had passed through those cells not long before. (And they really knew!) The Yezhov men said that during those two years of 1937 and 1938 a *half-million* "political prisoners" had been shot throughout the Soviet Union, and 480,000 *blatnye*—habitual thieves—in addition. (The thieves were all shot under Article 59-3 because they constituted "a basis of Yagoda's power"; and thereby the "ancient and noble companionship of thieves" was pruned back.)

How improbable are these figures? Taking into consideration that the mass executions went on not for two full years but only for a year and a half, we would have to assume (under Article 58—in other words, the politicals alone) an average of 28,000 executions per month in that period. For the whole Soviet Union. But at how many different locations were executions being carried out? A figure of 150 would be very modest. (There were more, of course. In Pskov alone, the NKVD set up torture and execution chambers in the basements of many churches, in former hermits' cells. And even in 1953 tourists were still not allowed into these churches, on the grounds that "archives" were kept there. The cobwebs hadn't been swept out for ten

years at a stretch: those were the "archives" they kept there. And before beginning restoration work on these churches, they had to haul away the bones in them by the truckload.) On the basis of this calculation, an average of six people were shot in the course of one day at each execution site. What's so fantastic about that? It is even an understatement! (According to other sources, 1,700,000 had been shot by January 1, 1939.)

During the years of World War II, the use of capital punishment was occasionally extended for various reasons (as, for example, by the militarization of the railroads), and, at times, was broadened as to method (from April, 1943, on, for example, with the decree on *hanging*).

All these events delayed to a certain extent the promised full, final, and perpetual repeal of the death penalty. However, the patience and loyalty of our people finally earned them this reward. In May, 1947, Iosif Vissarionovich inspected his new starched dickey in his mirror, liked it, and dictated to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet the Decree on the Abolition of Capital Punishment in peacetime (replacing it with a new maximum term of twenty-five years—it was a good pretext for introducing the so-called *quarter*).

But our people are ungrateful, criminal, and incapable of appreciating generosity. Therefore, after the rulers had creaked along and eked out two and a half years without the death penalty, on January 12, 1950, a new decree was published that constituted an about-face: "In view of petitions pouring in from the national republics [the Ukraine?], from the trade unions [oh, those lovely trade unions; they always know what's needed], from peasant organizations [this was dictated by a sleepwalker: the Gracious Sovereign had stomped to death all peasant organizations way back in the Year of the Great Turning Point], and also from cultural leaders [now, *that* is quite likely]," capital punishment was restored for a conglomeration of "traitors of the Motherland, spies, and subversives-diversionists." (And, of course, they forgot to repeal the *quarter,* the twenty-five-year sentence, which remained in force.)

And once this return to our familiar friend, to our beheading blade, had begun, things went further with no effort at all: in 1954, for premeditated murder; in May, 1961, for theft of state

property, and counterfeiting, and terrorism in places of imprisonment (this was directed especially at prisoners who killed informers and terrorized the camp administration); in July, 1961, for violating the rules governing foreign currency transactions; in February, 1962, for threatening the lives of (shaking a fist at) policemen or Communist vigilantes, the so-called "druzhinniki"; then for rape; and immediately thereafter for bribery.

But all of this is simply temporary—until complete abolition. And that's how it's described today too.[7]

And so it turns out that Russia managed longest of all without capital punishment in the reign of the Empress Elizabeth Petrovna.

■

In our happy, blind existence, we picture condemned men as a few ill-fated, solitary individuals. We instinctively believe that we could never end up on death row, that it would take an outstanding career if not heinous guilt for that to happen. A great deal has still to be shaken up inside our heads for us to get the real picture: a mass of the most ordinary, average, gray people have languished in death cells for the most ordinary, everyday misdemeanors, and, although some were lucky and had their death sentences commuted, which was purely a matter of chance, they very often got the *super* (which is what the prisoners called "the supreme measure," since they hate lofty words and manage somehow to give everything a nickname that is both crude and short).

The agronomist of a District Agricultural Department got a death sentence for his mistaken analysis of collective farm grain! (Maybe it was because his analysis wasn't what his chiefs wanted from him?) That was in 1937.

Melnikov, the chairman of a handicraft artel that made spools for thread, was sentenced to death because a spark from a steam engine in his artel had caused a fire! That was in 1937. (True, his death sentence was commuted to a "tenner.")

7. "Osnovy Ugolovnogo Zakonodatelstva SSSR" ("Fundamental Principles of Criminal Legislation of the U.S.S.R."), Article 22, in *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR* (*Bulletin of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.*), 1959, No. 1.

In that same Kresty Prison in Leningrad, in 1932, two of the men in death cells were Feldman, convicted of possessing foreign currency, and Faitelevich, a student at the conservatory, for having sold steel ribbon for pen points. Primordial commerce, the bread and butter and pastime of the Jew, had also become worthy of the death penalty.

Ought we to be surprised then that the Ivanovo Province village lad Geraska got the death penalty? In honor of the spring St. Nicholas holiday, he went off to the next village to celebrate; he drank heavily and, with a stick, he hit the rear end—no, not of the policeman himself, but of the policeman's horse. (True, in a rage at the police he ripped a piece of board off the village soviet building and then yanked out the village soviet telephone by the cord, shouting: "Smash the devils!")

Whether our destiny holds a death cell in store for us is not determined by what we have done or not done. It is determined by the turn of a great wheel and the thrust of powerful external circumstances. For example, Leningrad was under siege and blockade. And what would its highest-ranking leader, Comrade Zhdanov, think if there were no executions among the *cases* in Leningrad State Security during such difficult times? He would think the Organs were lying down on the job, would he not? Were there not big underground plots, directed from outside by the Germans, to be discovered? Why were such plots discovered under Stalin in 1919 and not under Zhdanov in 1942? No sooner ordered than done. Several ramified plots were discovered. You were asleep in your unheated Leningrad room, and the sharp claws of the black hand were already hovering over you. And yet none of this depended on you. Notice was taken of a Lieutenant General Ignatovsky, whose windows looked out on the Neva; he had pulled out a white handkerchief to blow his nose. Aha, a signal! Furthermore, because Ignatovsky was an engineer, he liked to talk about machinery with the sailors. And that clinched it! Ignatovsky was arrested. The time for reckoning came. Come on now, name forty members of your organization. He named them. And so, if you happened to be an usher at the Aleksandrinsky Theatre, your chances of being named as one of his particular forty were minimal. But if you were a professor at the Technological Institute, there you were on that list (once

more, that accursed intelligentsia). So how could it depend on you? To be on such a list amounted to execution for each one.

And so they shot all of them. But here is how Konstantin Ivanovich Strakhovich, a very important Russian scientist in hydrodynamics, remained alive: Some even higher bigwigs in State Security were dissatisfied because the list was too small and not enough people were being shot. Therefore Strakhovich was selected as a suitable center for uncovering a new organization. He was summoned by Captain Altshuller: "What's this all about? Did you rush to confess everything so that you'd get shot and thereby conceal the underground government? What was your role in it?" Thus Strakhovich found himself in a new round of interrogations while he remained on death row. He proposed that they consider him the underground Minister of Education. (He wanted to get it over with as soon as possible!) But that wasn't good enough for Altshuller. The interrogation continued, and by this time Ignatovsky's group was being executed. During one of the interrogation sessions Strakhovich got angry. It wasn't that he wanted to live but that he was tired of dying, and, more than anything else, the lies made him sick. And so while he was being cross-questioned in the presence of some Security police bigwig, he pounded on the table: "*You* are the ones who ought to be shot. I am not going to lie any longer. I take back all my testimony." And his outburst helped! Not only did they stop interrogating him, but they forgot about him in his death cell for a long time.

In all probability an outburst of desperation in the midst of general submissiveness will always help.

Thus many were shot—thousands at first, then hundreds of thousands. We divide, we multiply, we sigh, we curse. But still and all, these are just numbers. They overwhelm the mind and then are easily forgotten. And if someday the relatives of those who had been shot were to send one publisher photographs of their executed kin, and an album of those photographs were to be published in several volumes, then just by leafing through them and looking into the extinguished eyes we would learn much that would be valuable for the rest of our lives. Such reading, almost without words, would leave a deep mark on our hearts for all eternity.

In one household I am familiar with, where some former zeks live, the following ceremony takes place: On March 5, the day of the death of the Head Murderer, they spread out on the table all the photographs of those who were shot and those who died in camps that they have been able to collect—several dozen of them. And throughout the day solemnity reigns in the apartment —somewhat like that of a church, somewhat like that of a museum. There is funeral music. Friends come to visit, to look at the photographs, to keep silent, to listen, to talk softly together. And then they leave without saying good-bye.

And that is how it ought to be everywhere. At least these deaths would have left a small scar on our hearts.

So that they should not have died *in vain!*

And I, too, have a few such chance photographs. Look at these at least:

Viktor Petrovich Pokrovsky—shot in Moscow in 1918.

Aleksandr Shtrobinder, a student—shot in Petrograd in 1918.

Vasily Ivanovich Anichkov—shot in the Lubyanka in 1927.

Aleksandr Andreyevich Svechin, a professor of the General Staff—shot in 1935.

Mikhail Aleksandrovich Reformatsky, an agronomist—shot in Orel in 1938.

Yelizaveta Yevgenyevna Anichkova—shot in a camp on the Yenisei in 1942.

How does *all that* happen? What is it like for people to *wait* there? What do they feel? What do they think about? And what decisions do they come to? And what is it like when they are *taken away?* And what do they feel in their last moments? And how, actually, do they . . . well . . . do they . . . ?

The morbid desire to pierce that curtain is natural. (Even though it is, of course, never going to happen to any of *us.*) And it is natural that those who have survived cannot tell us about the very end—because, after all, they were pardoned.

What happens *next* is something the executioners know about. But the executioners are not about to talk. (Take, for instance, that famous *Uncle Lyosha* in the Kresty Prison in Leningrad, who twisted the prisoner's hands behind his back and put handcuffs

on him, and then, if the prisoner shouted down the nighttime corridor, "Farewell, brothers!" crammed a rolled-up rag into his mouth—just why should he tell you about it? He is probably still walking around Leningrad, well dressed. But if you happen to run into him in a beer parlor on the islands or at a soccer game, ask him!)

However, even the executioner doesn't know about everything right to the very end. While a motor roars its accompaniment, he fires his pistol bullets, unheard, into the back of a head, and he is himself stupidly condemned not to understand what he has done. He doesn't know about *the very end!* Only those who have been killed know it all to the very end—and that means no one.

It's true, however, that the artist, however obliquely and unclearly, nevertheless knows some part of what happens right up to the actual bullet, the actual noose.

So we are going to construct—from artists and from those who were pardoned—an approximate picture of the death cell. We know, for example, that they do not sleep at night but lie there *waiting*. That they calm down again only in the morning.

Narokov (Marchenko) in his novel, *Imaginary Values,*[8] a work much spoiled by the author's self-assigned task of describing everything as though he were Dostoyevsky, of tearing at the reader's heartstrings and trying to move him even more than Dostoyevsky, nevertheless in my opinion described the death cell and the scene of the execution itself very well. One cannot verify it, of course, but somehow one believes it.

The interpretations of earlier artists, for example, Leonid Andreyev, seem today somehow to belong willy-nilly to Krylov's time, a century and a half ago. And for that matter, what fantasist could have imagined the death cells of 1937? Of necessity, he would have woven his psychological threads: what it was like to wait, how the condemned man kept listening, and the like. But who could have foreseen and described such unexpected sensations on the part of prisoners condemned to death as:

1. Prisoners awaiting execution suffered from the *cold*. They had to sleep on the cement floor under the windows, where it was 28 degrees Fahrenheit. (Strakhovich.) You could freeze to death while you were waiting to be shot.

8. N. Narokov, *Mnimyye Velichiny, Roman v 2-kh Chastyakh* (*Imaginary Values; a Novel in Two Parts*), New York, Chekhov Publishing House, 1952.

2. They suffered from being in *stuffy, overcrowded cells.* Into a cell intended for solitary confinement they would shove seven (*never* fewer), sometimes ten, fifteen, even *twenty-eight* prisoners awaiting execution. (Strakhovich in Leningrad, 1942.) And they remained packed in this way for weeks or even *months!* What kind of nightmare was your *seven* to be hanged? People in these circumstances don't think about execution, and it's not being shot they worry about, but how to move their legs, how to turn over, how to get a gulp of air.

In 1937, when up to forty thousand prisoners were being held at one time in the prisons of Ivanovo—the internal prison of the NKVD, No. 1, No. 2, and the cells for preliminary detention —although they were just barely designed to hold three to four thousand, Prison No. 2 held a mixture of prisoners under interrogation, prisoners condemned to camp, prisoners sentenced to be executed, prisoners whose death sentences had been commuted, and ordinary thieves—and all of them *stood for several days so jammed in against each other* in one big cell that it was impossible either to raise or lower an arm and those who were shoved up against the bunks could easily break their legs on the edges. It was winter, but in order not to be suffocated the prisoners broke the glass in the windows. (It was in this cell that the old Bolshevik Alalykin, with his snow-white head of hair—he had joined the Party in 1898 and had quit the Party in 1917 after the April Theses—waited for his death sentence to be carried out.)

3. Prisoners sentenced to death also suffered from *hunger.* They waited such a long time after the death sentence had been imposed that their principal sensation was no longer the fear of being shot but the pangs of hunger: where could they get something to eat? In 1941 Aleksandr Babich spent seventy-five days in a death cell in the Krasnoyarsk Prison. He had already reconciled himself to death and awaited execution as the only possible end to his unsuccessful life. But he *began to swell up from starvation.* At that point, they commuted his death sentence to ten years, and that was when he began his camp career. And what was the record stay in a death cell? Who knows? Vsevolod Petrovich Golitsyn, the *elder* of a death cell, so to speak, spent 140 days in it in 1938. But was that a record? The glory of Russian science, famed geneticist N. I. Vavilov, waited several

months for his execution—yes, *maybe even a whole year.* As a prisoner still under death sentence he was evacuated to the Saratov Prison, where he was kept in a basement cell that had no window. When his death sentence was commuted in the summer of 1942, he was transferred to a general cell, and he could not even walk. Other prisoners carried him to the daily outdoor walk, supporting him under the arms.

4. Prisoners sentenced to death were given no medical attention. Okhrimenko was kept in a death cell for a long time in 1938, and he became very ill. Not only did they refuse to put him in the hospital, but the doctor took forever to come to see him. When she finally did come, she didn't go into the cell; instead, without examining him or even asking him any questions, she handed him some powders through the bars. And fluid began to accumulate in Strakhovich's legs—dropsy. He told the jailer about it—and they sent him, believe it or not, a dentist.

And when a doctor did enter the picture, was it right for him to cure the prisoner under sentence of death—in other words, to prolong his expectation of death? Or did humanitarianism dictate that the doctor should insist on execution as quickly as possible? Here is another little scene from Strakhovich: The doctor entered and, talking with the duty jailer, he pointed a finger at the prisoners awaiting execution: "He's a dead man! He's a dead man! He's a dead man!" (He was pointing out to the jailer the victims of malnutrition and insisting that it was wrong to torment people so, that it was time to shoot them.)

What, in fact, was the reason for holding them so long? Weren't there enough executioners? One must point out that the prison authorities often suggested to and even asked many of the condemned prisoners to sign appeals for commutation; and when prisoners objected strongly and refused, not wanting any more "deals," *they signed appeals in the prisoners' names.* And at the very least it took months for the papers to move through the twists and turns of the machine.

A clash between two different institutions was probably involved. The interrogatory and judicial apparatus—as we learned from the members of the Military Collegium, they were one and the same—anxious to expose nightmarish and appalling cases,

could not impose anything less than a deserved penalty on the criminals—death. But as soon as the sentences had been pronounced and entered into the official record of interrogation and trial, the scarecrows now called condemned men no longer interested them. And, in actual fact, there hadn't been any sedition involved, nor would the life of the state be affected in any way if these condemned men remained alive. So they were left entirely to the prison administration. And that administration, which was closely associated with Gulag, looked at prisoners from the economic point of view. To them the important *figures* were not an increase in the number of executions but an increase in the manpower sent out to the Archipelago.

And that is exactly the light in which Sokolov, the chief of the internal prison of the Big House in Leningrad, viewed Strakhovich, who finally became *bored* in the death cell and asked for paper and pencil for his scientific work. In a notebook he first composed "On the Interaction of a Liquid and a Solid Moving in It," and then "Calculations for Ballistas, Springs and Shock Absorbers," and then "Bases of the Theory of Stability." They had already allotted him an individual "scientific" cell and fed him better, and questions began to come to him from the Leningrad Front. He worked out for them "Volumetric Weapons' Fire Against Aircraft." And it all ended with Zhdanov's commuting his death sentence to fifteen years. (The mail from the mainland was slow, but soon his regular *commutation* order came from Moscow, and it was more generous than Zhdanov's: merely a *tenner.*)[9]

And N.P., a mathematician with the rank of assistant professor, was exploited by the interrogator Kruzhkov (yes, yes, that same thief) for his personal ends. Kruzhkov was taking correspondence courses. And so he *summoned P. from the death cell* and gave him problems to solve in the theory of functions of a complex variable for Kruzhkov's assignments (and probably they weren't even his either).

So what did world literature understand about pre-execution suffering?

9. Strakhovich has all his prison notebooks even now. And his "scientific career" outside the bars only began with them. He was destined later on to head up one of the first projects in the U.S.S.R. for a turbojet engine.

Finally, we learn from a story of Ch——v that a death cell can be used as *an element in interrogation,* as a method of coercing a prisoner. Two prisoners in Krasnoyarsk who had refused to confess were suddenly summoned to a "trial," "sentenced" to the death penalty, and taken to the death cell. (Ch——v said: "They were subjected to a staged trial." But in a context in which every trial is staged, what word can we use to distinguish this sort of pseudo trial from the rest? A stage on a stage, or a play within a play, perhaps?) They let them get a good swallow of that deathlike life. And then they put in stoolies who were allegedly sentenced to die also and who suddenly began to repent having been so stubborn during interrogation and begged the jailer to tell the interrogator that they were now ready to sign everything. They were given their confessions to sign and then taken out of the cell during the *day*—in other words, not to be shot.

And what about the *genuine* prisoners in that cell who had served as the raw material for the interrogators' game? They no doubt experienced reactions of their own when people in there "repented" and were pardoned? Well, of course, but those are the producer's costs, so to speak.

They say that Konstantin Rokossovsky, the future marshal, was twice taken into the forest at night for a supposed execution. The firing squad leveled its rifles at him, and then they dropped them, and he was taken back to prison. And this was also making use of "the supreme measure" as an interrogator's trick. But it was all right; nothing happened; and he is alive and healthy and doesn't even cherish a grudge about it.

And almost always a person obediently allows himself to be killed. Why is it that the death penalty has such a hypnotic effect? Those pardoned recall hardly anyone in their cell who offered any resistance. But there were such cases. In the Leningrad Kresty Prison in 1932, the prisoners sentenced to execution took the jailers' revolvers away and opened fire. Following this, a different approach was adopted: After peering through the peephole to locate the person they wanted to take, they swarmed into the cell—five armed jailers at a time—and rushed to grab their man. There were eight prisoners under sentence of death

in the cell, but every one of them, after all, had sent a petition to Kalinin and every one expected a commutation, and therefore: "You today, me tomorrow." They moved away and looked on indifferently while the condemned man was tied up, while he cried out for help, while they shoved a child's rubber ball into his mouth. (Now, looking at that child's ball, could one really guess all its possible uses? What a good example for a lecturer on the dialectical method!)

Does hope lend strength or does it weaken a man? If the condemned men in every cell had ganged up on the executioners as they came in and choked them, wouldn't this have ended the executions sooner than appeals to the All-Russian Central Executive Committee? When one is already on the edge of the grave, why not resist?

But wasn't everything foredoomed anyway, from the moment of arrest? Yet all the arrested crawled along the path of hope on their knees, as if their legs had been amputated.

■

Vasily Grigoryevich Vlasov remembers that night after he'd been sentenced when he was being taken through dark Kady, and four pistols were brandished on four sides of him. His main thought was: "What if they shoot right now, as a provocation, claiming I was trying to escape?" Obviously he didn't yet believe in his sentence. He still hoped to live.

They confined him in the police room. He was allowed to lie down on the desk to sleep, and two or three policemen kept continuous guard by the light of a kerosene lamp. They talked among themselves: "I kept listening and listening for four days, and I never could understand what they were being condemned for." "It's not for us to understand."

Vlasov lived in this room for five days: they were waiting for an official confirmation of the verdict in order to execute them right there in Kady; it was not easy to convoy the condemned men to some other point. Someone sent a telegram for Vlasov requesting pardon: "I do not admit my guilt, and I request that my life be spared." There was no reply. During these days Vlasov's hands shook so that he could not lift his spoon to his

mouth and, instead, picked up his bowl and drank directly from it. Klyugin visited him to jeer. (Soon after the Kady case, he was transferred from Ivanovo to Moscow. That year saw swift ascendancies and swift declines among those crimson stars of the Gulag heaven. The time was approaching when they, too, would be hurled into that same pit, but they didn't know it.)

Neither confirmation nor commutation of the sentence arrived, so they had to take the four condemned men to Kineshma. They took them in four one-and-a-half-ton trucks, with one condemned man guarded by seven policemen in each truck.

In Kineshma they were put in the crypt of a monastery. (Monastery architecture, liberated from monkish ideology, was very useful for us.) At this point some other condemned prisoners were added to their group, and they were all taken in a prisoners' railroad car to Ivanovo.

In the freight yard in Ivanovo they separated three from the rest—Saburov, Vlasov, and one of the men from the other group —and immediately took the others away—to be shot—so as not to crowd the prison any further. And thus it was that Vlasov said farewell to Smirnov.

The three others were put in the courtyard of Prison No. 1 in the dank and raw October air and held there for four hours while they led out, led in, and searched other groups of prisoners in transit. There still was no actual proof that they wouldn't be shot that very day. During those four hours, they had to sit there on the ground and think about it. At one point Saburov thought they were being taken to be shot, but they were actually taken to a cell instead. He did not cry out, but he gripped his neighbor's arm so hard that the latter yelled with pain. The guards had to drag Saburov and prod him with their bayonets.

There were four death cells in this prison—in the same corridor as the juvenile cells and the hospital cells! The death cells had two doors: the customary wooden door with a peephole and a door made of iron grating; each door had two locks, and the jailer and the block supervisor each had a key to a different one, so the doors could be opened only by the two together. Cell 43 was on the other side of a wall of the interrogator's office, and at night, while the condemned men were waiting to be executed, their ears were tormented by the screams of prisoners being tortured.

Vlasov was put into Cell 61. This was a cell intended for solitary confinement, sixteen feet long and a little more than three feet wide. Two iron cots were anchored to the floor by thick iron bolts, and on each cot two condemned men were lying, their heads at opposite ends. Fourteen other prisoners were lying crosswise on the cement floor.

Though it has long been well known that even a corpse has a right to *three arshins* of earth (and even that seemed too little to Chekhov), in this cell each of the condemned had been allotted, while waiting for death, a little less than a third of that!

Vlasov asked whether executions were carried out immediately. "See for yourself. We've been here for ages and we're still alive."

The time of waiting began—of the well-known kind: the prisoners didn't sleep all night long; in a state of total depression, they waited to be led out to death; they listened for every rustling in the corridor. (And the worst thing was that endless waiting destroys the will to resist.) Particularly nerve-racking were the nights following a day on which someone received a commutation of sentence. He went off with cries of happiness, and fear thickened in the cell. After all, rejections as well as commutation had rolled down from the high mountain that day. And at night they would come for someone.

Sometimes the locks rattled at night and hearts fell: Is it for me? Not me! ! And the turnkey would open the wooden door for some nonsense or other: "Take your things off the window sill." That unlocking of the door probably took a year off the lives of all nineteen inmates; maybe if that door was unlocked a mere fifty times, they wouldn't have to waste bullets! But how grateful to him everyone was because everything was all right: "We'll take them off right away, citizen chief!"

After the morning visit to the toilet, they went to sleep, liberated from their fears. Then the jailer brought in the pail of gruel and said: "Good morning!" According to prison rules, the inner, iron door was supposed to be opened only in the presence of the duty officer for the prison. But, as is well known, human beings are better and lazier than their rules and instructions, and in the morning the jailer came in without the duty officer and greeted them quite humanly—no, it was even more precious than that: "Good morning!"

To whom else on all the earth was that morning as good as it was to them! Grateful for the warmth of that voice and the warmth of that dishwater, they drifted off to sleep until noon. (They ate only in the morning!) Many were unable to eat when they woke during the day. Someone had received a parcel. Relatives might or might not know about the death sentence. Once in the cell, these parcels became common property, but they lay and rotted there in the stagnant damp.

By day there was still a little life and activity in the cell. The block supervisor might come around—either gloomy Tarakanov or friendly Makarov—and offer paper on which to write petitions, and ask whether any of them who had some money wanted to buy smokes from the commissary. Their questions seemed either too outrageous or extraordinarily human: the pretense was being made that they weren't condemned men at all, was that it?

The condemned men broke off the bottoms of matchboxes, marked them like dominoes, and played away. Vlasov eased his tension by telling someone about the Consumer Cooperatives, and his narrative always took on a comic touch.[10] Yakov Petrovich Kolpakov, the Chairman of the Sudogda District Executive Committee, a Bolshevik since the spring of 1917 who joined up at the front, sat for dozens of days without changing his position, squeezing his head in his hands, his elbows on his knees, always staring at the same spot on the wall. (It must have been so jolly to recall the spring of 1917.) Vlasov's garrulity irritated him: "How can you?" And Vlasov snapped back at him: "And what are you doing? Preparing yourself for heaven?" Vlasov spoke with round "o's" even in a fast retort. "For myself, I've decided one thing only. I'm going to tell the executioner: 'You alone, not the judges, not the prosecutors, you alone are guilty of my death, and you are going to have to live with it! If it weren't for you willing executioners, there would be no death sentences!' So then let him kill me, the rat!"

Kolpakov was shot. Konstantin Sergeyevich Arkadyev, the former Manager of the Aleksandrov District Agricultural Department in Vladimir Province, was shot. Somehow, in his case,

10. His stories about the consumer cooperatives are remarkable and deserve to be published.

the farewells were particularly hard. During the night six guards came tramping in for him, making a big rush of it, while he, gentle, well mannered, kept turning around, twisting his cap in his hands, putting off the moment of his leavetaking—from the last people on earth for him. And when he said his final "Farewell," you could hardly hear his voice.

At the very first moment, when the victim has been pointed out, the rest are relieved (It's not me!). But right after he has been taken away, the ones left behind are in a state that is hardly any easier to bear than his. All the next day, those left behind are destined to silence and they won't want to eat.

However, Geraska, the young fellow who broke up the building of the village soviet, ate well and slept a lot, getting used to things, even here, with typical peasant facility. He somehow couldn't believe they would shoot him. (And they didn't. They commuted his sentence to a *tenner.*)

Several of the inmates turned gray in three or four days before their cellmates' eyes.

When people wait so long for execution, their hair grows, and orders are given for the whole cell to get haircuts, for the whole cell to get baths. Prison existence goes on, without regard to sentences.

Some individuals lost the ability to speak intelligibly and to understand. But they were left there to await their fate anyway. Anyone who went insane in the death cell was executed insane.

Many sentences were commuted. It was right then, in that fall of 1937, that fifteen- and twenty-year terms were introduced for the first time since the Revolution, and in many cases they replaced the executioners' bullets. There were also commutations to ten-year sentences. And even to *five* years. In the country of miracles even such miracles as this were possible: yesterday he deserved to be executed, and this morning he gets a juvenile sentence; he is a minor criminal, and in camp he may even be able to move around without convoy.

V. N. Khomenko, a sixty-year-old Cossack captain from the Kuban, was also imprisoned in their cell. He was the "soul of the cell," if a death cell can be said to have a soul: he cracked jokes; he smiled to himself; he didn't act as if things were bad. He had become unfit for military service way back after the Japanese

War, had studied horse breeding, and then served in the provincial local self-government council; by the thirties he was attached to the Ivanovo Provincial Agricultural Department as "inspector of the horse herd of the Red Army." In other words, he was supposed to see to it that the best horses went to the army. He was arrested and sentenced to be shot for wrecking—for recommending that stallions be gelded before the age of three, by which means he allegedly "subverted the fighting capacity of the Red Army." Khomenko appealed the verdict. Fifty-five days later the block supervisor came around and pointed out to him that he had addressed his appeal to the wrong appeals jurisdiction. Right then and there, propping the paper against the wall and using the block supervisor's pencil, Khomenko crossed out one jurisdiction and substituted another, as if it were a request for a pack of cigarettes. Thus clumsily corrected, the appeal made the rounds for another sixty days, so Khomenko had been awaiting death for four months. (As for waiting a year or two, after all, we spend year after year waiting for the angel of death! Isn't our whole world just a death cell?) And one day *complete rehabilitation* for Khomenko arrived. (In the interval since his sentence, Voroshilov had given orders that gelding should be done before age three.) Die one minute and dance the next!

Many sentences were commuted, and many prisoners had high hopes. But Vlasov, comparing his case with those of the others, and keeping in mind his conduct at the trial as the principal factor, felt that things were likely to go badly for him. They had to shoot someone. They probably had to shoot at least half of those condemned to death. So he came to believe they would shoot him. And he wanted just one thing—not to bow his head when it happened. That recklessness which was one of his characteristics returned to him and increased within him, and he was all set to be bold and brazen to the very end.

And an opportunity came his way. Making the rounds of the prison for some reason—most likely just to give himself a thrill—the Chief of the Investigation Department of Ivanovo State Security, Chinguli, ordered the door of their cell opened and stood on the threshold. He spoke to someone and asked: "Who is here from the Kady case?"

He was dressed in a short-sleeved silk shirt, which had just begun to appear in Russia and therefore still seemed effeminate.

And either he or his shirt was doused in a sweetish perfume that drifted into the cell.

Vlasov swiftly jumped up on the cot and shouted shrilly: "What kind of colonial officer is this? Get out of here, you murderer!" And from that height he spat juicily full into Chinguli's face.

And he hit his mark.

Chinguli wiped his face and retreated. Because he had no right to enter the cell without six guards, and maybe not even with six guards either.

A reasonable rabbit ought not to behave in that fashion. What if Chinguli had been dealing with your case at that moment and was the one to decide whether to commute or not? After all, he must have had a reason for asking: "Who is here from the Kady case?" That was probably why he came.

But there is a limit, and beyond it one is no longer willing, one finds it too repulsive, to be a reasonable little rabbit. And that is the limit beyond which rabbits are enlightened by the common understanding that all rabbits are foredoomed to become only meat and pelts, and that at best, therefore, one can gain only a postponement of death and not life in any case. That is when one wants to shout: "Curse you, hurry up and shoot!"

It was this particular feeling of rage which took hold of Vlasov even more intensely during his forty-one days of waiting for execution. In the Ivanovo Prison they had twice suggested that he write a petition for pardon, but he had refused.

But on the forty-second day they summoned him to a box where they informed him that the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet had commuted the supreme measure of punishment to twenty years of imprisonment in corrective-labor camps with disenfranchisement for five additional years.

The pale Vlasov smiled wryly, and even at that point words did not fail him:

"It is strange. I was condemned for lack of faith in the victory of socialism in our country. But can even Kalinin himself believe in it if he thinks camps will still be needed in our country twenty years from now?"

At the time it seemed quite inconceivable: after twenty years.

Strangely, they were still needed even after thirty.

Chapter 12

■

Tyurzak

Oh, that good Russian word "ostróg"—meaning "jail." What a powerful word it is and how well put together. One senses in it the strength of those thick, impenetrable walls from which one cannot escape. And it is all expressed in just six letters. And it has so many interesting connotations deriving from words that are close to it in sound: as, for instance, strógost—meaning "severity"; and ostrogá—meaning "harpoon"; and ostrotá—meaning "sharpness" (the sharpness of the porcupine's quills when they land in your snout, the sharpness of the blizzard lashing your frozen face, the sharpness of the pointed stakes of the camp perimeter, and the sharpness of the barbed wire too); and the word "ostorózhnost"—meaning "caution" (a convict's caution)—is somewhere close too; and then the word "rog"—meaning "horn." Yes, indeed, the horn juts out boldly and is pointed forward! It is aimed straight at us.

And if one glances over all Russia's jail customs and conduct, at the entire institution during, say, the last ninety years, then you'll see not just one horn really, but two horns. The Narodnaya Volya ("People's Will") revolutionaries began at the tip of one horn, right where it gores, right where it's too excruciatingly painful to take even on the breastbone. They kept wearing it down gradually until it got rounded off, shrank to a stump, and was hardly a horn any longer, and finally became just a woolly open spot (this was the beginning of the twentieth century). But then,

after 1917, the first swelling of a new knob could be felt, and there, there, splaying out and with the slogan "You don't have the right!"—it began to thrust upward again, and to narrow to a point and harden, to acquire a horny surface—until by 1938 it was pinning the human being right in that gap between the collarbone and the neck: *tyurzak*![1] And once a year, the single stroke of a watchman's bell could be heard in the night in the distance: "TONnnnnn!"[2]

If we pursue this parabola with the help of one of the prisoners in the Schlüsselburg Fortress near St. Petersburg, we find that initially things were pretty bad.[3] The prisoner had a number, and no one called him by his family name; the gendarmes acted as if they had been trained in the Lubyanka. They didn't speak a word on their own. If you stammered out: "We . . . ," the reply came: "Speak only for yourself!" The silence of the grave. The cell was in eternal shadows, the windows were frosted glass, the floor asphalt. The hinged ventilation pane in the window was open for forty minutes a day. The food consisted of grits and cabbage soup without meat. They would not allow you any scholarly books from the library. You wouldn't see another human being for two years at a stretch. Only after three years would they let you have sheets of paper—numbered.[4] And then, little by little, things got to be more lenient as the point of the horn got rounded off; there was white bread; and then the prisoners were allowed tea and sugar; one could have money and could buy things in addition to the rations; smoking was permitted; they put transparent glass in the windows; and the transom could be kept open all the time; they painted the walls a light color; in no time at all you could get books by *subscribing* to the St. Petersburg library; there were gratings between the garden plots; one could converse through them, and prisoners even delivered lectures to other prisoners. By then the prisoners were urging the prison administration: "Give us more land to work on, more!" So they planted

1. Tyurzak=TYURemnoye ZAKlyucheniye=prison confinement. Tyurzak is an official term.

2. TON=Tyurma Osobogo Naznacheniya=Special Purpose Prison. TON is likewise an official abbreviation.

3. Vera Figner, *Zapechatlenny Trud: Vospominaniya v Dvukh Tomakh* (*Impressed Labor: Memoirs in Two Volumes*), Moscow, "Mysl," 1964.

4. According to the account of M. Novorussky, from 1884 to 1906 three prisoners in Schlüsselburg committed suicide and five others went insane.

two large prison courtyards in flowers and vegetables—no fewer than 450 varieties! And then there were scientific collections, a carpentry shop, a smithy, and they could earn money and buy books, even Russian political books,[5] and also magazines from abroad. And they wrote their families and got letters from them. And they could go out to walk the whole day long if they liked.

And gradually, as Figner recollects, "it was no longer the superintendent who shouted at the prisoners, but we who shouted at him." In 1902, because he refused to forward a protest of hers, *she ripped the shoulder boards off his uniform.* And the result was that a *military investigator* came and *apologized* profusely to Figner for the ignoramus superintendent!

How did that horn come to shrink and broaden? Figner explains it to some extent by the humanitarian attitudes of individual prison superintendents, and also by the fact that the "gendarmes became friendly with the prisoners," got used to them. One significant factor certainly was the prisoners' determination and dignity and adroitness in conducting themselves. But nonetheless I myself believe that it was the temper of the times: this moisture and freshness in the air which drove away the thundercloud; this breeze of freedom, which was sweeping through society, it was decisive. Without it one could have given the gendarmes instructions from the *Short Course* every Monday, and kept tightening things up, kept putting the screws on. And instead of "impressed labor," Vera Nikolayevna Figner, for tearing off an officer's shoulder boards, would have gotten *nine grams* in the back of her head in a cellar.

The weakening and shaking up of the Tsarist prison system did not come about on its own, of course, but because all society, in concert with the revolutionaries, was shaking it up and ridiculing it in every possible way. Tsarism lost its chance to survive not in the street skirmishes of February but several decades earlier, when youths from well-to-do families began to consider a prison term an honor; when army officers (even guard officers) began to regard it as dishonorable to shake the hand of a gendarme. And the more the prison system weakened, the more clearly

5. P. A. Krasikov, who, as we have seen, later condemned the Metropolitan Veniamin to death, read Marx's *Capital* in the Peter and Paul Fortress. (But he was there only a year, and then they let him out.)

evident were the triumphant *ethics of the political prisoners,* and the more visibly did the members of the revolutionary parties realize their strength and regard their own laws as superior to those of the state.

And that was how Russia of 1917 arrived, bearing 1918 on its shoulders. The reason we have proceeded immediately to 1918 is that the subject of our investigation does not permit us to dwell on 1917. In February, 1917, all political prisons, both those used for interrogation and those in which sentences were served, and all hard-labor prisons as well were emptied. It is a wonder that all the jailers managed to get through the year. Perhaps to make ends meet they simply set to work raising potatoes in their vegetable gardens. (But from 1918 on, things began to get much better for them, and at Shpalernaya Prison they were still serving the new regime even in 1928, and why not!)

In December, 1917, it had already become clear that it was altogether impossible to do without prisons, that some people simply couldn't be left anywhere except behind bars (see Chapter 2, above), because—well, simply because there was no place for them in the new society. And so it was that the new rulers managed to feel their way across the space between the two horns and grope for the budding of the second horn.

Of course, they proclaimed immediately that the horrors of the Tsarist prisons would not be repeated; that *fatiguing correction* would not be permitted; that there would be no compulsory silence in prison, no solitary confinement, no separating the prisoners from one another during outdoor walks, no marching in step and single file, not even any locked cells.[6] Go ahead, dear guests, get together, and talk as much as you like and complain about the Bolsheviks. And the attention of the new prison authorities was directed toward the combat readiness of the prison guards outside the walls and the takeover of the stock of prisons inherited from the Tsar. (This was *one particular part* of the machinery of state that did not have to be destroyed and rebuilt from its foundations.) Fortunately, it turned out that the Civil War had not resulted in the destruction of all the principal *central prisons* and jails. What was really necessary, however, was to repudiate all those old, besmirched words. So now they called

6. Vyshinsky, *Ot Tyurem k Vospitatelnym Uchrezhdeniyam.*

them *political isolators*—political detention centers—demonstrating with this phrase their view of the members of once revolutionary parties as political enemies and stressing not the punitive role of the bars but only the necessity of isolating (and only temporarily, it appeared) these old-fashioned revolutionaries from the onward march of the new society. So that was how the arches of the old central prisons (evidently including the one in Suzdal from the very beginning of the Civil War) came to receive SR's, Social Democrats, and Anarchists.

They all returned to prison with a consciousness of their rights as convicts and a long-established tradition of how to stand up for them. They accepted as their legal due a special *political ration* (conceded by the Tsar and confirmed by the Revolution), which included half a pack of cigarettes a day; purchases from the market (cottage cheese, milk); unrestricted walks outdoors during most hours of the day; being addressed with the formal personal pronoun by prison personnel and not having to stand up when addressed by them; confinement of husband and wife in the same cell; the right to have newspapers, magazines, books, writing materials, and personal articles, even including razors and scissors; sending and receiving letters three times a month; visits from relatives once a month; windows without bars, of course (at that time the concept of the "muzzle" did not exist); unrestricted visits from cell to cell; courtyards with greenery and lilacs for outdoor walks; the freedom to choose companions for outdoor walks and to toss small mailbags from one courtyard to another; and the dispatching of pregnant women from prison into exile two months before they were due to give birth.[7]

All this was just the *politregime*—the prison regimen for political prisoners. But the political prisoners of the twenties remembered well something even more important: *self-government for political prisoners,* and hence even in prison the sense of oneself as part of a whole, a member of a community. Self-government (the free election of spokesmen who represented all the interests of all the prisoners in negotiations with the prison administration) weakened the pressure on the individual because all shoulders bore it together; and it augmented each protest because all voices spoke as one.

7. From 1918 on, they did not hesitate to imprison women SR's, even when they were pregnant.

They undertook to defend all this! And the prison authorities undertook to take it all away from them. And a silent battle began in which no artillery shells were fired, and rifle shots only rarely, and the crash of broken glass wasn't audible even half a verst away. A mute struggle went on for vestiges of freedom, for vestiges of the right to have individual opinions, and it went on for almost twenty years—but no large, richly illustrated volumes describing it have ever been published. And all its ups-and-downs, its catalogue of victories and of defeats, are almost lost to us now, because, after all, there is no written language in the Archipelago and oral communication is broken off when people die. And only random particles of that struggle have occasionally come down to us, illuminated by moonlight that is indirect and indistinct.

And since that time we have grown so supercilious! We are familiar with tank battles; we know about nuclear explosions. What kind of struggle is it over the question of whether cells are kept locked and whether prisoners, to exercise their right to communicate, can openly spell out messages to each other by knocking on the walls, shout from window to window, drop notes from floor to floor on threads, and insist that at least the elected spokesmen of the various party fractions be allowed to move freely among the cells? What sort of a struggle is it to us when the chief of the Lubyanka goes into the cell and the Anarchist Anna G——va (in 1926) or the SR Katya Olitskaya (1931) refuses to stand up when he enters? And that savage beast thought up a punishment for Katya: to deprive her of the right to go to the toilet. What kind of struggle was it when two girls, Shura and Vera (in 1925), in protest against the Lubyanka rule—intended to stifle personality—that conversations may be carried on only in whispers, sang loudly in their cell (only about lilacs and the spring), and thereupon the prison chief, the Latvian Dukes, dragged them through the corridor to the toilet by their hair? Or when the students in a Stolypin car en route from Leningrad (1924) sang revolutionary songs and the convoy thereupon deprived them of water? They yelled out: "A Tsarist convoy wouldn't have done that!" and the convoy beat them. Or when the SR Kozlov, at the transit prison in Kem, loudly called the guards "executioners"—and because of that was dragged off and beaten?

After all, we have gotten used to regarding as *valor* only valor

in war (or the kind that's needed for flying in outer space), the kind which jingle-jangles with medals. We have forgotten another concept of *valor—civil valor*. And that's all our society needs, just that, just that, just that! That's all we need and that's exactly what we haven't got.

In 1923, in Vyatka Prison, the SR Struzhinsky and his comrades (how many were there? who were they? what were they protesting against?) barricaded themselves in a cell, poured kerosene over all the mattresses, and *incinerated themselves*. Now that was an act altogether in the tradition of Schlüsselburg before the Revolution; and, not to go further, what an uproar such an act provoked *then,* before the Revolution, and how all Russian society was aroused! But this time around neither Vyatka knew about them, nor Moscow, nor history. And yet the human flesh crackled in the flames in exactly the same way.

That was the initial purpose of imprisonment on the Solovetsky Islands (nicknamed Solovki): it was such a good place, cut off from communication with the outside world for half a year at a time. You couldn't be heard from there no matter how loud you shouted, and you could even burn yourself up for all anyone would know. In 1923 the imprisoned socialists were transported there from Pertominsk on the Onega Peninsula—and split up among three isolated monasteries.

Take Savvatyevsky Monastery, consisting of the two buildings which had formerly been guest quarters for religious believers on pilgrimage. Part of the lake was included in the prison compound. In the early months everything seemed to be all right: they had their special political regimen, several relatives succeeded in getting there for visits, and three spokesmen from the three parties were wholly responsible for negotiating with the prison administration. And the monastery compound was a free zone. Inside it the prisoners could talk, think, and do as they pleased without hindrance.

But even then, at the dawn of the Archipelago, there were insistent unpleasant *latrine rumors* (not yet so called) to the effect that the special political regimen was going to be liquidated.

And, in reality, having waited until the middle of December, until the White Sea was no longer navigable, with the consequent cutoff in all communication with the outside world, the chief of

the Solovetsky Camp, Eichmans,[8] announced that new instructions had indeed been received regarding the regimen. They wouldn't, of course, take everything away, not by any means! They would cut down on correspondence, and then on something else, too, and, as the most keenly felt measure of the lot, from that day on, December 20, 1923, the right to go in and out of prison buildings twenty-four hours a day would be curtailed—limited to the daylight hours up to 6 P.M.

The party fractions decided to protest, and the SR's and Anarchists called for volunteers: on the first day of the new prohibition they would go outside exactly at 6 P.M. But, as it turned out, Nogtyev, the chief of the Savvatyevsky Monastery Prison, had such an itchy trigger finger that even *before* the appointed hour of 6 (and maybe their watches showed different times; after all, there was no checking it by radio in those days), the guards entered the compound with rifles and opened fire on the prisoners there, who were out of doors quite legally. Three volleys killed six and critically wounded three.

The next day Eichmans himself showed up: there had been an unfortunate misunderstanding. Nogtyev was removed (transferred and promoted). A funeral was held for the victims. They sang in chorus across the Solovetsky wilderness:

You fell a victim in a fateful fray.

(Was not this perhaps the last occasion when that long-drawn-out melody was permitted for newly dead victims?) They pushed a great boulder onto the common grave and carved on it the names of those who had been killed.[9]

One cannot say that the press concealed this event. *Pravda,* for example, carried a report in small type: the prisoners had *attacked* the convoy, and six had been killed. The honest newspaper *Rote Fahne* reported *revolt* on Solovki.[10]

8. How like Eichmann, is it not?

9. In 1925 the stone was overturned, and the names on it were thus buried too. Any of you who clamber about Solovki—seek it out and gaze upon it!

10. One of the SR's in the Savvatyevsky Monastery was Yuri Podbelsky. He collected the medical documents on the Solovetsky massacre—for publication at some future date. But a year later, at the Sverdlovsk Transit Prison, they discovered a false bottom in his suitcase and confiscated the material he'd hidden. And that is how Russian history stumbles and falls.

Yet the prisoners had defended the regimen successfully! And for a whole year no one spoke of changing it.

For the whole of 1924, yes. But toward the end of the year, insistent rumors circulated again that they were planning to introduce a new system in December. The Dragon had grown hungry again. He wanted new victims. So even though the three monasteries in which socialists were confined—Savvatyevsky, Troitsky, and Muksalmsky—were on separate islands, they managed, by conspiratorial methods, to reach an agreement that all the party fractions in all three monasteries would on one and the same day deliver an ultimatum to Moscow and to the Solovki administration: They must either be removed from the Solovetsky Islands before navigation stopped or else the previous political regimen must be left unchanged. The ultimatum stipulated a time limit of two weeks, and then all three prisons would go on a hunger strike.

This kind of unity compelled attention. It wasn't the sort of thing you could allow to go in one ear and out the other. One day before the time limit expired, Eichmans visited each monastery and announced that Moscow had refused. And on the appointed day a hunger strike began (not a dry hunger strike—water was allowed) in all three monastery prisons (which were now unable to communicate with each other). In Savvatyevsky, about two hundred people struck. Those who fell ill were exempted from striking. A doctor from among the prisoners examined the strikers every day. A collective hunger strike is always more difficult to carry out than an individual one; after all, the weakest rather than the strongest of the strikers can determine its outcome. The only point to a hunger strike is to carry it out with implacable determination and in such a way that everyone knows everyone else involved personally and trusts them fully. Given various party fractions, given several hundred people, both disagreements and moral anguish on other people's behalf were inevitable. After fifteen days, it was necessary to vote by secret ballot in Savvatyevsky—the urn with the ballots was taken from room to room—whether to continue or to lift the hunger strike.

And Moscow and Eichmans waited them out! After all, they were well fed, and there wasn't a peep from the capital newspapers about the hunger strike, and there were no student pro-

test meetings at Kazan Cathedral. *Silence* was already confidently shaping our history.

The monasteries lifted the hunger strike. They had not won out, but they hadn't lost either. The political regimen was left intact for the winter, except that cutting firewood in the forests was added, but that was logical enough. And in the spring of 1925 it looked as though the hunger strike had brought victory: the prisoners from all three monastery prisons were removed from Solovki! To the mainland! No more Arctic night and no more half-year cut off from communication!

But both the convoy and their rations en route were very harsh for that time. And soon they were all perfidiously tricked: On the pretext that their spokesmen would be more comfortable in the "staff" car with the stores and equipment, they were deprived of their leaders. The "staff" car was detached at Vyatka, and the spokesmen were taken to the Tobolsk Isolator. Only at that point did it become clear that the hunger strike of the previous fall had failed. The strong and influential spokesmen had been taken away so as to tighten up on the rest. Yagoda and Katanyan personally directed the incarceration of the former Solovetsky Islands prisoners in the long-standing but until then unused buildings of the Verkhne-Uralsk Isolator, which they thus "opened" in the spring of 1925 (under Chief Dupper). It was destined to be a particular bugbear to prisoners for many decades ahead.

The relocated former Solovki prisoners immediately lost their freedom to move about. The cells were locked. They succeeded in electing spokesmen nonetheless, but the spokesmen didn't have the right to go from cell to cell. The unlimited circulation between cells of money, personal articles, and books, which had existed earlier, was now forbidden. They shouted back and forth from window to window—until the guard fired from his tower into the cells. In reply they organized a protest—they broke windowpanes and destroyed prison equipment. (And, after all, breaking a windowpane is something to think about twice. They might just *not* replace it all winter, and there would be no big surprise in that. It was under the Tsar that the glaziers used to come on the run.) The struggle continued, but it was now being carried on in desperation and under grave handicaps.

In the year 1928 (according to Pyotr Petrovich Rubin) some

event or other precipitated a new joint hunger strike by the entire Verkhne-Uralsk Isolator. But this time the earlier stern and solemn atmosphere was absent, as were the approval of friends and a doctor of their own. On a certain day of the strike, the jailers came bursting into the cells in overwhelming numbers, and simply began to *beat* the weakened prisoners with clubs and boots. They beat them to within an inch of their lives—and the hunger strike ended.

■

From our experience of the past and our literature of the past we have derived a naïve faith in the power of a hunger strike. But the hunger strike is a purely moral weapon. It presupposes that the jailer has not entirely lost his conscience. Or that the jailer is afraid of public opinion. Only in such circumstances can it be effective.

The Tsarist jailers were still inexperienced. They got nervous if one of their prisoners went on a hunger strike; they exclaimed over it; they looked after him; they put him in the hospital. There are many examples, but this work is not about them. It is even humorous to note that it was enough for Valentinov to go on a hunger strike for twelve days: as a result, he not only achieved some relaxation in the regimen but was *totally released* from interrogation—whereupon he went to Lenin in Switzerland. Even in the Orel central hard-labor prison the strikers always won. They got the regimen relaxed in 1912 and further relaxed in 1913, to the point of general access to outdoor walks for all political hard-labor prisoners—who were obviously so unrestricted by their supervisors that they managed to compose and send out to freedom their appeal "to the Russian people." (And this from the hard-labor prisoners of a central prison!) Furthermore, it was *published.* (It's enough to make one's eyes pop out of one's head! Someone has to have been crazy!) It was published in 1914 in issue No. 1 of the *Vestnik Katorgi i Ssylki*—the *Hard-Labor and Exile Herald.*[11] (And what about that *Herald* itself?

11. M. N. Gernet, *Istoriya Tsarskoi Tyurmy* (*A History of Czarist Prisons*), Moscow, Yuridicheskaya Literatura (Legal Literature Publishers), 1960–1963, Vol. V, Ch. 8.

Should we, too, perhaps try to publish one like it?) In 1914, after only *five* days of a hunger strike—admittedly, without water—Dzerzhinsky and four of his comrades obtained *all* their numerous demands (which had to do with living conditions).[12]

In those years, there were no dangers or difficulties for the prisoner beyond the torments of hunger. They could not beat him up for going on a hunger strike, nor sentence him to a second term, nor increase his term, nor shoot him, nor send him off on a prisoner transport. (All this was to come later on.)

In the Revolution of 1905 and the years following it, the prisoners felt themselves to be masters of the prison to such an extent that they did not even go to the trouble of declaring a hunger strike; they simply destroyed prison property (so-called "obstructions"), or went so far as to declare a *strike,* although it might seem that for prisoners this would have hardly any meaning. Thus in the city of Nikolayev in 1906, 197 prisoners in the local prison declared a "strike" in conjunction with people *outside.* Outside the prison, leaflets in support of their strike were published and daily meetings assembled in front of the prison. These meetings (and it goes without saying that the prisoners were at the windows, which had, of course, no "muzzles") forced the administration to accept the demands of the "striking" prisoners. After this, some people on the street and others behind the bars joined in singing revolutionary songs. And things went on that way for *eight* days. (And nobody stopped them! It was, after all, a year of postrevolutionary repression.) On the ninth day all the demands of the prisoners were satisfied! Similar incidents occurred at the time in Odessa, in Kherson, and in Yelizavetgrad. That's how easily victory was attained then.

It would be interesting, incidentally, to compare the effectiveness of hunger strikes under the Provisional Government, but those few Bolsheviks imprisoned from the July days until the Kornilov episode (Kamenev, Trotsky, and Raskolnikov for a while longer) evidently had no reason to go on a hunger strike.

In the twenties, the lively picture of hunger strikes grows clouded (though that depends, of course, on the point of view . . .). This widely known weapon, which had justified itself so gloriously, was, of course, taken over not only by recognized

12. *Ibid.*

"politicals" but also by those who were not recognized as such—the *KR's* (Article 58—Counter-Revolutionaries) and all other kinds of riffraff. However, those arrows which used to be so piercing had been blunted somehow, or else some iron hand had checked them in midflight. True, written declarations of impending hunger strikes were still accepted, and nothing subversive was seen in them as yet. But unpleasant new rules were trotted out: The hunger striker had to be isolated in a special solitary cell (in the Butyrki it was in the Pugachev Tower). It was essential to keep any knowledge about the hunger strike not only from *people outside,* who might protest publicly, and from prisoners in cells nearby, but even from those in the cell in which the hunger striker had been imprisoned until that day—for that, too, constituted a public, and it was necessary to separate him from it. This measure had as its nominal justification the argument that the prison administration had to make sure that the hunger strike was going on honestly—that others in the cell weren't sneaking food to the hunger striker. (And how had that been verified previously? Through honest, "cross my heart" word of honor?)

Still, it was possible in those years to achieve at least one's personal demands by this means.

From the thirties on, state thinking about hunger strikes took a new turn. What did the state want with even such watered-down, isolated, half-suppressed hunger strikes? Wasn't the ideal picture one of prisoners who had no will of their own, nor the capacity to make their own decisions—and of a prison administration that did their thinking and their deciding for them? These are, if you will, the only prisoners who can exist in the new society. And so from the beginning of the thirties, they stopped accepting declarations of hunger strikes as legal. "The hunger strike as a method of resistance *no longer exists,*" they proclaimed to Yekaterina Olitskaya in 1932, and they said the same thing to many others. The government has abolished your hunger strikes—and that's that. But Olitskaya refused to obey and began to fast. They let her go on fasting in solitary for *fifteen* days. Then they took her to the hospital and put milk and dried crusts in front of her to tempt her. But she stood firm, and on the *nineteenth* day she won her victory: she got an extended outdoor period and newspapers and parcels from the Political Red Cross. (That's how one

had to moan and groan in order to receive those legitimate relief parcels!) Overall, however, it was an insignificant victory and paid for too dearly. Olitskaya recalls such foolish hunger strikes on the part of others too: people starved up to twenty days in order to get delivery of a parcel or a change of companions for their outdoor walk. Was it worth it? After all, in the *New Type Prison* one's strength, once lost, could not be restored. The religious-sect member Koloskov fasted until he died on the twenty-fifth day. Could one in general permit oneself to fast in the New Type Prison? After all, the new prison heads, operating in secrecy and silence, had acquired several powerful methods of combating hunger strikes:

1. Patience on the part of the administration. (We have seen enough of what this meant from preceding examples.)

2. Deception. This, too, can be practiced thanks to total secrecy. When every step is reported by the newspapers, you aren't going to do much deceiving. But in our country, why not? In 1933, in the Khabarovsk Prison, S. A. Chebotaryev, demanding that his family be informed of his whereabouts, fasted for seventeen days. (He had come from the Chinese Eastern Railroad in Manchuria and then suddenly disappeared, and he was worried about what his wife might be thinking.) On the seventeenth day, Zapadny, the Deputy Chief of the Provincial GPU, and the Khabarovsk Province prosecutor (their ranks indicate that lengthy hunger strikes were really not so frequent) came to see him and showed him a telegraph receipt (There, they said, they had informed his wife!), and thus persuaded him to take some broth. And the receipt was a fake! (Why had these high-ranking officials gone to this trouble? Not, certainly, for Chebotaryev's life. Evidently, in the *first* half of the thirties there was still some sort of personal responsibility on the part of higher-ups for long-drawn-out hunger strikes.)

3. Forced artificial feeding. This method was adapted, without any question, from experience with wild animals in captivity. And it could be employed only in total secrecy. By 1937 artificial feeding was, evidently, already in wide use. For example, in the group hunger strike of socialists in the Yaroslavl Central Prison, artificial feeding was forced on everyone on the fifteenth day.

Artificial feeding has much in common with rape. And that's what it really is: four big men hurl themselves on one weak being and deprive it of its one interdiction—they only need to do it once and what happens to it next is not important. The element of rape inheres in the violation of the victim's will: "It's not going to be the way you want it, but the way I want it; lie down and submit." They pry open the mouth with a flat disc, then broaden the crack between the jaws and insert a tube: "Swallow it." And if you don't swallow it, they shove it farther down anyway and then pour liquefied food right down the esophagus. And then they massage the stomach to prevent the prisoner from resorting to vomiting. The sensation is one of being morally defiled, of sweetness in the mouth, and a jubilant stomach gratified to the point of delight.

Science did not stand still, and other methods were developed for artificial feeding: an enema through the anus, drops through the nose.

4. A new view of the hunger strike: that hunger strikes are a continuation of counterrevolutionary activity in prison, and must be punished with a new *prison term.* This aspect promised to give rise to a very rich new category in the practices of the New Type Prison, but it remained essentially in the realm of threats. And it was not, of course, any sense of humor that cut it short, but most likely simple laziness: why bother with all that when patience will take care of it? Patience and more patience—the patience of a well-fed person vis-à-vis one who is starving.

Approximately in the middle of 1937, a new directive came: From now on the prison administration *will not in any respect be responsible for those dying on hunger strikes!* The last vestige of personal responsibility on the part of the jailers had disappeared! (In these circumstances, the prosecutor of the province would not have come to visit Chebotaryev!) Furthermore, so that the interrogator shouldn't get disturbed, it was also announced that days spent on hunger strike by a prisoner under interrogation should be crossed off the official interrogation period. In other words, it should not only be considered that the *hunger strike had not taken place,* but the prisoner should be regarded as not having been in prison at all during the period of the strike. Thus the interrogator would not be to blame for being behind

schedule. Let the only perceptible result of the hunger strike be the prisoner's exhaustion!

And that meant: If you want to kick the bucket, go ahead!

Arnold Rappoport had the misfortune to declare a hunger strike in the Archangel NKVD Internal Prison at the very moment when this directive arrived. It was a particularly severe form of hunger strike, and that ought, it would seem, to have given it more impact. His was a "dry" strike—without fluids—and he kept it up for thirteen days. (Compare the five-day "dry" strike of Dzerzhinsky, who probably wasn't isolated in a separate cell. And who in the end won total victory.) And during those *thirteen* days in solitary, to which Rappoport had been moved, only a medical assistant looked in now and then. No doctor came. And no one from the administration took the slightest interest in *what he was demanding* with his hunger strike. They never even asked him. The only attention the administration paid him was to search his cell carefully, and they managed to dig out some hidden makhorka and several matches. What Rappoport wanted was to put an end to the interrogator's humiliation of him. He had prepared for his hunger strike in a thoroughly scientific way. He had received a food parcel earlier, and so he ate only butter and ring-shaped rolls, baranki, and he quit eating black bread a week before his strike. He starved until he could see the light through his hands. He recalls experiencing a sensation of lightheadedness and clarity of thought. At a certain moment, a kindly, compassionate woman jailer named Marusya came to his cell and whispered to him: "Stop your hunger strike; it isn't going to help; you'll just die! You should have done it a week earlier." He listened to her and called off his hunger strike without having gotten anywhere at all. Nevertheless, they gave him hot red wine and a roll, and afterward the jailers took him back to the common cell in a hand-carry. A few days later, his interrogation began again. But the hunger strike had not been entirely useless: the interrogator had come to understand that Rappoport had will power enough and no fear of death, and he eased up on the interrogation. "Well, now, it turns out you are quite a wolf," the interrogator said to him. "A wolf!" Rappoport affirmed. "And I'll certainly never be your dog."

Rappoport declared another hunger strike later on, at the

Kotlas Transit Prison, but it turned out somewhat comically. He announced that he was demanding a new interrogation, and that he would not board the prisoner transport. They came to him on the third day: "Get ready for the prisoner transport." "You don't have the right. I'm on a hunger strike!" At that point four young toughs picked him up, carried him off, and tossed him into the bath. After the bath, they carried him to the guardhouse. With nothing else left to do, Rappoport stood up and went to join the column of prisoners boarding the prisoner transport—after all, there were dogs and bayonets at his back.

And that is how the New Type Prison defeated bourgeois hunger strikes.

Even a strong man had no way left him to fight the prison machine, except perhaps suicide. But is suicide really resistance? Isn't it actually submission?

The SR Yekaterina Olitskaya thinks that the Trotskyites, and, subsequently, the Communists who followed them into prison, did a great deal to weaken the hunger strike as a weapon for fighting back: they declared hunger strikes too easily and lifted them too easily. She says that even the Trotskyite leader I. N. Smirnov, after going on a hunger strike four days before their Moscow trial, quickly surrendered and lifted it. They say that up to 1936 the Trotskyites rejected any hunger strike *against the Soviet government* on principle, and never supported SR's and Social Democrats who were on hunger strikes.[13]

Let history say how true or untrue that reproach is. However, no one paid for hunger strikes so much and so grievously as the Trotskyites. (We will come to their hunger strikes and their strikes in camps in Part III.)

Excessive haste in declaring and lifting hunger strikes was probably characteristic of impetuous temperaments which reveal their feelings too quickly. But there were, after all, such natures, such characters, among the old Russian revolutionaries, too, and there were similar temperaments in Italy and France, but no-

13. But they always demanded support for themselves from the SR's and Social Democrats. On a prisoner transport to Karaganda and the Kolyma in 1936, they addressed as traitors and provocateurs all those who refused to sign their telegram to Kalinin protesting "against sending the *vanguard of the Revolution* [i.e., themselves] to the Kolyma." (The story was told by Makotinsky.)

where, either in prerevolutionary Russia, in Italy, or in France, were the authorities so successful in discouraging hunger strikes as in the Soviet Union. There was probably no less physical sacrifice and no less spiritual determination in the hunger strikes in the second quarter of our century than there had been in the first. But there was no public opinion in the Soviet Union. And on that basis the New Type Prison waxed and grew strong. And instead of easy victories, the prisoners suffered hard-earned defeats.

Decades passed and time produced its own results. The hunger strike—the first and most natural weapon of the prisoner—in the end became alien and incomprehensible to the prisoners themselves. Fewer and fewer desired to undertake them. And to prison administrations the whole thing began to seem either plain stupidity or else a malicious violation.

When, in 1960, Gennady Smelov, a nonpolitical offender, declared a lengthy hunger strike in the Leningrad prison, the prosecutor went to his cell for some reason (perhaps he was making his regular rounds) and asked him: "Why are you torturing yourself?"

And Smelov replied: "Justice is more precious to me than life."

This phrase so astonished the prosecutor with its irrelevance that the very next day Smelov was taken to the Leningrad Special Hospital (i.e., the insane asylum) for prisoners. And the doctor there told him:

"We suspect you may be a schizophrenic."

■

Along the rings of the horn, where it began to narrow to its point, the former central prisons arose, rechristened, by the beginning of 1937, the "special isolators." The last little weaknesses were now being squeezed out of the system, the last vestiges of light and air. And the hunger strike of the tired socialists, their numbers sparse by now, in the Yaroslavl Penalty Isolator at the beginning of 1937 was one of their last, desperate efforts.

They were still demanding that everything should be restored to what it once had been. They were demanding both the election

of spokesmen and free communication between cells, but it is unlikely that even they had hopes of this any longer. By a fifteen-day hunger strike, even though it ended with their being force-fed through a tube, they had apparently succeeded in defending some portions of their regimen: a one-hour period outdoors, access to the provincial newspaper, notebooks for their writing. These they kept. But the authorities promptly took away their personal belongings and threw at them the common prison clothing of the special isolator. And a little while later, they cut half an hour off their time outdoors. And then they reduced it by another fifteen minutes.

These were the same people who were being dragged through a sequence of prisons and exiles according to the rules of the Big Solitaire. Some hadn't lived an ordinary, decent human life for ten years; some for fifteen; all they had was this meager prison life, with hunger strikes to boot. A few who had gotten used to winning out over the prison administrations before the Revolution were still alive. However, before the Revolution they were marching in step with Time against a weakening enemy. And now Time was against them and allied with an enemy growing steadily stronger. Among them were young people too (how strange that seems to us nowadays)—those who considered themselves SR's, Social Democrats, or Anarchists even after the parties themselves had been battered out of existence—and the only future these new recruits had to look forward to was life in prison.

The loneliness surrounding the entire prison struggle of the socialists, which became more hopeless with every year that passed, grew more and more acute, approaching a vacuum in the end. That was not how it had been under the Tsar: Throw open the prison doors and the public greeted them with flowers. Now they leafed through the newspapers and saw that they were being drenched in vituperation, with slops even. (For it was the socialists, after all, whom Stalin saw as the most dangerous enemies of his socialism.) And the people were silent. And what could give them any reason to dare suppose that the people had any kindly feelings left toward those they had not long before elected to the Constituent Assembly? And finally the newspapers stopped showering profanity on them because Russian socialists had by that time come to seem so unimportant and so impotent and even nonexistent. By this time these socialists

were remembered outside in freedom only as something belonging to the past—the distant past. And young people hadn't the slightest idea that SR's and Mensheviks were still alive somewhere. And in the sequence of Chimkent and Cherdyn exile, and the Verkhne-Uralsk and Vladimir isolators—how could they not tremble in their dark solitary-confinement cells, cells with "muzzles" by this time, and feel that perhaps their program and their leaders had been mistaken, that perhaps their tactics and actions had been mistaken too? And all their actions began to seem nothing but inaction—and their lives, devoted only to suffering, a fatal delusion.

Their lonely prison struggle had been essentially undertaken for all of us, for all future prisoners (even though they themselves might not think so, nor understand this), for *how* we would exist in imprisonment and how we would be kept there. And if they had won out, then probably nothing of what happened to us would have happened, nothing of what this book is about, all seven of its parts.

But they were beaten. They failed to protect either themselves or us.

In part, too, the canopy of loneliness spread over them because, in the very first postrevolutionary years, having naturally accepted from the GPU the well-merited identification of *politicals,* they naturally agreed with the GPU that all who were "to the right"[14] of them, beginning with the Cadets, were not politicals but KR's —*Counter-Revolutionaries*—the manure of history. And they also regarded as KR's those who suffered for their faith in Christ. And whoever didn't know what "right" or "left" meant —and that, in the future, would be all of us—they considered to be KR's also. And thus it was that, in part voluntarily, in part involuntarily, keeping themselves aloof and shunning others, they gave their blessing to the future "Fifty-eight" into whose maw they themselves would disappear.

Objects and actions change their aspect quite decisively depending on the position of the observer. In this chapter we have been describing the prison stand of the socialists from their point of view. And, as you see, it is illuminated by a pure and tragic light. But those KR's whom the politicals treated so con-

14. I do not like these "left" and "right" classifications; they are conditional concepts, they are loosely bandied about, and they do not convey the essence.

temptuously on Solovki, those KR's recall the politicals in their own way! *"The politicals?* What a nasty crowd they were: they looked down their noses at everyone else; they stuck to their own group; they demanded their own special rations all the time and their own special privileges. And they kept quarreling among themselves incessantly." And how can one but feel that there is truth here too? All those fruitless and endless arguments which by now are merely comical. And those demands for additional rations for themselves in comparison with the masses of the hungry and impoverished? In the Soviet period, the honorable appellation of *politicals* turned out to be a poisoned gift. And then another reproach followed immediately: Why was it that the socialists, who used to *escape* so easily under the Tsar, had become so soft in Soviet prisons? Where are their *escapes?* In general there were quite a few escapes, but who can remember any socialists among them?

And, in turn, those prisoners "to the left" of the socialists—the Trotskyites and the Communists—shunned the socialists, considering them exactly the same kind of KR's as the rest, and they closed the moat of isolation around them with an encircling ring.

The Trotskyites and the Communists, each considering their own direction more pure and lofty than all the rest, despised and even hated the socialists (and each other) who were imprisoned behind the bars of the same buildings and went outdoors to walk in the same prison courtyards. Yekaterina Olitskaya recalls that in 1937, at the transit prison on Vanino Bay, when the socialists called to each other across the fence between the men's and women's compounds, looking for fellow socialists and reporting news, the Communists Liza Kotik and Mariya Krutikova were indignant because they might bring down punishment on them all by such irresponsible behavior. They said: "All our misfortunes are due to those socialist rats! [A profound explanation, and so dialectical too!] They should be choked!" And those two girls in the Lubyanka in 1925, whom I have already mentioned, sang about spring and lilacs only because one of them was an SR and the second a member of the Communist opposition, and they had no political song in common, and in fact the Communist-deviationist girl shouldn't really have joined the SR girl in her protest at all.

And if in a Tsarist prison the different parties often joined

forces in a common struggle (let us recall in this connection the escape from the Sevastopol Central Prison), in Soviet prisons each political group tried to ensure its own purity by steering clear of the others. The Trotskyites struggled on their own, apart from the socialists and Communists; the Communists didn't struggle at all, for how could one allow oneself to struggle against one's own government and one's own prison?

It turned out in consequence that the Communists in isolators and in prisons for long-termers were restricted earlier and more cruelly than others. In 1928, in the Yaroslavl Central Prison, the Communist Nadezhda Surovtseva went outdoors for fresh air in a single-file column that was forbidden to engage in conversation, while the socialists were still chattering in their own groups. She was not permitted to tend the flowers in the courtyard —because they had been left by previous prisoners who had struggled for their rights. And they deprived her of newspapers too. (However, the Secret Political Department of the GPU permitted her to have complete sets of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Hegel in her cell.) Her mother's visit to her took place virtually in the dark, and her downcast mother died soon afterward. (What must she have thought of her daughter's circumstances in prison?)

The difference between the treatment of socialist prisoners and that of the Communists persisted many years, went far beyond this, and extended to a difference in rewards: in 1937–1938 the socialists were imprisoned like the rest and they all got their *tenners* too. But, as a rule, they were not forced to denounce themselves: they had, after all, never hidden their own, *special*, individual views—which were quite enough to get them sentenced. But a Communist had no *special*, individual views, so what, then, was he to be sentenced for if a self-denunciation wasn't forced out of him?

■

Even though the enormous Archipelago was already spreading across the land, the prisons for long-termers didn't fall into decay. The old jail tradition was being zealously carried on. Everything new and invaluable which the Archipelago had contributed to the indoctrination of the masses was still not enough in itself.

The deficiency was provided for by the complementary existence of the TON's—the Special Purpose Prisons—and prisons for long-termers in general.

Not everyone swallowed up by the Great Machine was allowed to mingle with the natives of the Archipelago. Well-known foreigners, individuals who were too famous or who were being held secretly, purged gaybisty, could not by any means be seen openly in camps; their hauling a barrow did not compensate for the disclosure and the consequent *moral-political*[15] damage. In the same way, the socialists, who were engaged in a continuous struggle for their prison rights, could not conceivably be permitted to mingle with the masses but had to be kept separately and, in fact, suffocated separately—in view of their special privileges and rights. Much later on, in the fifties, as we shall learn later in this work, the Special Purpose Prisons were also needed to isolate camp rebels. And in the last years of his life, disappointed in the possibilities of "reforming" thieves, Stalin gave orders that various *ringleaders of the thieves* should also get *tyurzak* rather than camp. And then, to be sure, it was necessary for the state to support free of charge in prison those prisoners who because of their feebleness would have immediately died off in camp and would thus have shirked their duty to serve out their terms. And others who couldn't possibly be used in camp work—like the blind Kopeikin, a man of seventy who used to sit all day long in the market in Yuryevets on the Volga. His songs and facetious comments won him ten years for KRD—Counter-Revolutionary Activity—but in his case they had to substitute prison for camp.

The inventory of old jails, inherited from the Romanov dynasty, was, of necessity, looked after, remodeled, strengthened, and perfected. Certain central prisons, like the one in Yaroslavl, were so well and suitably appointed (doors plated with iron; table, stool, and cot permanently anchored in each cell) that the only thing required to bring them up to date was the installation of "muzzles" on the windows and the fencing in of the courtyards where the prisoners walked in order to reduce them to the size of a cell (by 1937 all the trees on prison grounds had been cut down, all vegetable gardens plowed under, and all grassy areas paved with asphalt). Others, like the one in Suzdal, required new

15. This term actually exists! And it has a sky-blue swampy coloration!

equipment, and the monastery arrangement had to be remodeled, but, after all, self-incarceration of a body in a monastery and its incarceration in a prison by the state serve physically similar purposes, and therefore the buildings were always easy to adapt. One of the buildings of the Sukhanovka Monastery was adapted for use as a prison for long-termers. Of course, it was also necessary to make up for losses from the Tsarist inventory: the conversion of the Peter and Paul Fortress in Leningrad and of Schlüsselburg near Leningrad into museums for tourists. The Vladimir Central Prison was expanded and added to—with a big new building constructed under Yezhov. It was heavily used and garnered many prisoners over those decades. We have already mentioned how the Tobolsk Central Prison was inaugurated, and that Verkhne-Uralsk was opened in 1925 for continuous and abundant use. (To our misfortune, all these isolators are still in use and are *in operation* at the moment these lines are being written.) From Tvardovsky's poem "Distance Beyond Distance" one can draw the conclusion that the Aleksandrovsk Central Prison wasn't empty in Stalin's time either. We have less information about the one in Orel: it is feared that it suffered serious damage during World War II. But not far from it was the well-equipped prison for long-termers in Dmitrovsk-Orlovsky.

During the twenties the prisoner's *food* was very decent in the isolators for politicals (still called "politizakrytki"—"political lock-ups"—by the prisoners): the lunches always included some meat; fresh vegetables were served; milk could be bought in the commissary. In 1931–1933 the food deteriorated sharply, but things were no better out in freedom at that time. Both scurvy and dizziness from lack of food were no rarity in the prisons for politicals in those years. Later on the food improved, but it was never the same as before. In 1947, in the Vladimir TON, I. Korneyev was constantly hungry: one pound of bread, two pieces of sugar, two hot dishes which were not at all filling; the only thing available in unlimited quantities was boiling water. (It will, of course, be said once more that this was not a typical year and there was hunger outside in freedom, too, at the time. This was when they generously allowed freedom to feed prison: unlimited parcels were permitted.) The *light* in cells was always "rationed,"

so to speak, in both the thirties and the forties: the "muzzles" on the windows and the frosted reinforced glass created a permanent twilight in the cells (darkness is an important factor in causing depression). They often stretched netting above the window "muzzle," and in the winter it was covered with snow, which cut off this last access to the light. Reading became no more than a way of ruining one's eyes. In the Vladimir TON, they made up for this lack of light at night: bright electric lights burned all night long, preventing sleep. And in the Dmitrovsk Prison in 1938 (N. A. Kozyrev), there was light in the evenings and at night—a kerosene lamp on a little shelf way up near the ceiling, that burned away and smoked up the last air; in 1939 there were electric lights that glowed red at half-voltage. *Air* was "rationed" too. The hinged panes for ventilation were kept locked, and opened only during the interval of the prisoners' trip to the toilet, as prisoners recall from both Dmitrovsk and Yaroslavl prisons. (Y. Ginzburg: The bread grew moldy between morning and lunchtime; the sheets were damp, and the walls green.) In Vladimir in 1948 there was no lack of air, because the transom was open permanently. *Walks outdoors* ranged from fifteen to forty-five minutes at various hours in various prisons. There was no such thing as the communication with the soil that had existed in Schlüsselburg or Solovki; everything that grew had been torn up by the roots, trampled, covered with concrete and asphalt. They even forbade lifting up one's head to the heavens during the walks: "Look at your feet!" This was the command both Kozyrev and Adamova remember from the Kazan Prison. *Visits* from relatives were forbidden in 1937 and never renewed. *Letters* could be sent to close relatives twice a month and could be received from them in most years. (But in Kazan they had to be returned to the administration the day after they had been read.) Access to the *commissary* to make purchases with the money sent in specifically limited amounts was usually permitted. *Furniture* was no unimportant part of the prison regimen. Adamova wrote eloquently of her happiness at finding a simple wooden cot with a straw mattress and a simple wooden table in her cell in Suzdal, after having had only cots that folded into the wall and chairs anchored to the floor. In the Vladimir TON, I. Korneyev experienced two different prison *regimens:*

Under one, in 1947–1948, personal articles were not removed from the cell; one could lie down during the day; and the turnkey very seldom looked through the peephole. But under the other, in 1949–1953, the cell was locked with two locks (the responsibility of the turnkey and duty officer respectively); one was forbidden to lie down, forbidden to talk in a normal voice (in Kazan, only in a whisper); personal articles were all taken away; a uniform of striped mattress ticking was issued; correspondence was permitted only twice a year and only on those days announced without warning by the chief of the prison (anyone who missed that day couldn't write), and only a sheet of paper half the size of a postal sheet could be used; violent *searches* and unscheduled visits were frequent, requiring the complete turning out of one's belongings and undressing down to one's skin. Communication between cells was prohibited to such an extent that the jailers went through the toilets with a portable lantern after each toilet visit and searched in each hole. The entire cell would get *punishment cells* for graffiti in the toilets. The punishment cells were a scourge in the Special Purpose Prisons. One could get into a punishment cell for coughing. ("Cover your head with your blanket. Then you can cough!") Or for *walking around the cell* (Kozyrev: "It was considered to be rebellious"); for the noise made by one's shoes. (In the Kazan Prison women had been issued men's shoes that were much too large for women's feet—size 10½.) Incidentally, Ginzburg was correct in concluding that periods in a punishment cell were meted out not for any particular misdemeanor but *according to a schedule:* every prisoner was required to spend some time there in order to learn what it was like. And the rules included another generally applicable point: "In the event of any display of unruliness in a punishment cell [?], the chief of the prison has the right to extend the term of incarceration there *to twenty days.*" Just what was meant by unruliness? Here's what happened to Kozyrev. (The descriptions of the punishment cell and much else in the prison regimen tally to such an extent among all sources that the stamp of a single system of administrative rules can be detected.) He was given another five days in the punishment cell for pacing back and forth. In the autumn, the building containing the punishment cells was unheated, and it was very cold. They forced prisoners

to undress down to their underwear and to take off their shoes. The floor was bare earth and dust (it might be wet dirt; and in the Kazan Prison it might even be covered with water). Kozyrev had a stool in his. (Ginzburg had none in hers.) He immediately concluded that he would perish, that he would freeze to death. But some kind of mysterious inner warmth gradually made itself felt, and it was his salvation. He learned to sleep sitting on his stool. They gave him a mug of hot water three times a day; it made him drunk. One of the duty officers, in violation of the rules, pressed a piece of sugar into his ten-and-a-half-ounce bread ration. On the basis of the rations issued him, and by observing the light from some faraway, tiny, labyrinthine window, Kozyrev kept count of the days. His five days had come to an end, but he had not been released. His sense of hearing had become extremely acute and he heard whispers in the corridor—having to do with either "the sixth" or "six days." This was a provocation: they were waiting for him to say that his five days were over and that it was time to let him out. That would have constituted unruliness, for which his stay in the punishment cell would have been prolonged. But he sat silent and obedient for another day, and then they let him out, just as if everything had been the way it was supposed to be. (Perhaps the chief of the prison used this method for testing all the prisoners in turn for submissiveness? And then he could sentence all those who weren't yet submissive enough to further terms in the punishment cell.) After the punishment cell the ordinary cell seemed like a palace. Kozyrev became deaf for half a year, and he began to get abscesses in his throat. His cellmate went insane from frequent imprisonment in the punishment cell, and Kozyrev was kept locked up with an insane man for more than a year, with just the two of them there. (Nadezhda Surovtseva recalls many cases of insanity in political isolators—she herself recalls as many as Novorussky totaled up in the whole chronicle of Schlüsselburg.)

Does it not at this point seem to the reader that we have gradually, step by step, mounted to the very point, the peak, of the second horn—and that it is probably really higher than the first? And probably sharper too?

But opinions are divided. With one voice the old camp veterans consider the Vladimir TON of the fifties a *resort*. That is how

Vladimir Borisovich Zeldovich, sent there from Abez Station, regarded it, and Anna Petrovna Skripnikova, who was sent there in 1956 from the Kemerovo camps. Skripnikova was particularly astonished at the regular dispatch, every ten days, of petitions and declarations (she even began to write, believe it or not, to the United Nations) and by the excellent library, including books in foreign languages: they used to bring the complete catalogue to the cell and you made out a list for a whole year ahead.

It is also necessary to keep in mind how elastic our law is: thousands of women ("wives") were sentenced to prison, to tyurzak. And then one fine day someone whistled—and they were transferred to camps. (The Kolyma hadn't fulfilled the gold plan.) And so they switched them, without any trial or any court.

In fact, does tyurzak actually *exist* at all, or is it only the vestibule for the camps?

■

And only here, right here, is where our chapter ought to have begun. It ought to have examined that glimmering light which, in time, the soul of the lonely prisoner begins to emit, like the halo of a saint. Torn from the hustle-bustle of everyday life in so absolute a degree that even counting the passing minutes puts him intimately in touch with the Universe, the lonely prisoner has to have been purged of every imperfection, of everything that has stirred and troubled him in his former life, that has prevented his muddied waters from settling into transparency. How gratefully his fingers reach out to feel and crumble the lumps of earth in the vegetable garden (but, alas, it is all asphalt). How his head rises of itself toward the Eternal Heavens (but, alas, this is forbidden). And how much touching attention the little bird on the window sill arouses in him (but, alas, there is that "muzzle" there, and the netting as well, and the hinged ventilation pane is locked). And what clear thoughts, what sometimes surprising conclusions, he writes down on the paper issued him (but, alas, only if you buy it in the commissary, and only if you turn it in to the prison office when you have used it up—for eternal safekeeping . . .).

But our peevish qualifications somehow interrupt our line of thought. The plan of our chapter creaks and cracks, and we no longer know the answer to the question: Is the soul of a person in the New Type Prison, in the Special Purpose Prison (the TON), purified or does it perish once and for all?

If the first thing you see each and every morning is the eyes of your cellmate who has gone insane, how then shall you save yourself during the coming day? Nikolai Aleksandrovich Kozyrev, whose brilliant career in astronomy was interrupted by his arrest, saved himself only by thinking of the eternal and infinite: of the order of the Universe—and of its Supreme Spirit; of the stars; of their internal state; and what Time and the passing of Time really are.

And in this way he began to discover a new field in physics. And only in this way did he succeed in surviving in the Dmitrovsk Prison. But his line of mental exploration was blocked by forgotten figures. He could not build any further—he had to have a lot of figures. Now just where could he get them in his solitary-confinement cell with its overnight kerosene lamp, a cell into which not even a little bird could enter? And the scientist prayed: "Please, God! I have done everything I could. Please help me! Please help me continue!"

At this time he was entitled to receive one book every ten days (by then he was alone in the cell). In the meager prison library were several different editions of Demyan Bedny's *Red Concert,* which kept coming around to each cell again and again. Half an hour passed after his prayer; they came to exchange his book; and as usual, without asking anything at all, they pushed a book at him. It was entitled *A Course in Astrophysics!* Where had it come from? He simply could not imagine such a book in the prison library. Aware of the brief duration of this coincidence, Kozyrev threw himself on it and began to memorize everything he needed immediately, and everything he might need later on. In all, just two days had passed, and he had eight days left in which to keep his book, when there was an unscheduled inspection by the chief of the prison. His eagle eye noticed immediately. "But you are an astronomer?" "Yes." "Take this book away from him!" But its mystical arrival had opened the way for his further work, which he then continued in the camp in Norilsk.

And so now we should begin the chapter on the conflict between the soul and the bars.

But what is this? The jailer's key is rattling brazenly in the lock. The gloomy block superintendent is there with a long list. "Last name, first name, patronymic? Date of birth? Article of the Code? Term? End of term? Get your *things* together. Be quick about it!"

Well, brothers, a prisoner transport! A prisoner transport! We're off to somewhere! Good Lord, bless us! Shall we gather up our bones?

Well, here's what: If we are still alive, then we'll finish this story another time. In Part IV. If we are still alive . . .

END OF PART I

PART II

Perpetual Motion

■

And then we see it in the wheels,
the wheels!
Which never like to rest,
the wheels! . . .
How heavy are the stones themselves,
the millstones!
They dance in merry ranks . . .
the millstones!

W. MÜLLER

Viktor Petrovich Pokrovsky

Aleksandr Shtrobinder

Vasily Ivanovich Anichkov

Aleksandr Andreyevich Svechin

Mikhail Aleksandrovich Reformatsky

Yelizaveta Yevgenyevna Anichkova

Chapter 1

■

The Ships of the Archipelago

Scattered from the Bering Strait almost to the Bosporus are thousands of islands of the spellbound Archipelago. They are invisible, but they exist. And the invisible slaves of the Archipelago, who have substance, weight, and volume, have to be transported from island to island just as invisibly and uninterruptedly.

And by what means are they to be transported? On what?

Great ports exist for this purpose—transit prisons; and smaller ports—camp transit points. Sealed steel ships also exist: railroad cars especially christened *zak cars* ("prisoner cars"). And out at the anchorages, they are met by similarly sealed, versatile *Black Marias* rather than by sloops and cutters. The *zak cars* move along on regular schedules. And, whenever necessary, whole caravans—trains of red cattle cars—are sent from port to port along the routes of the Archipelago.

All this is a thoroughly developed system! It was created over dozens of years—not hastily. Well-fed, uniformed, unhurried people created it. The Kineshma convoy waits at the Moscow Northern Station at 1700 hours on odd-numbered days to accept Black Marias from the Butyrki, Krasnaya Presnya, and Taganka prisons. The Ivanovo convoy has to arrive at the station at 0600 hours on even-numbered days to receive and hold in custody transit prisoners for Nerekhta, Bezhetsk, and Bologoye.

All this is happening right next to you, you can almost touch

it, but it's invisible (and you can shut your eyes to it too). At the big stations the loading and unloading of the dirty faces takes place far, far from the passenger platform and is seen only by switchmen and roadbed inspectors. At smaller stations a blind alleyway between two warehouses is preferred, into which the Black Marias can back so that their steps are flush with the steps of the zak car. The convict doesn't have time to look at the station, to see you, or to look up and down the train. He gets to look only at the steps. (And sometimes the lower step is waist-high, and he hasn't the strength to climb up on it.) And the convoy guards, who have blocked off the narrow crossing from the Black Maria to the zak car, growl and snarl: "Quick, quick! Come on, come on!" And maybe even brandish their bayonets.

And you, hurrying along the platform with your children, your suitcases, and your string bags, are too busy to look closely: Why is that second baggage car hitched onto the train? There is no identification on it, and it is very much like a baggage car —and the gratings have diagonal bars, and there is darkness behind them. But then why are soldiers, defenders of the Fatherland, riding in it, and why, when the train stops, do two of them march whistling along on either side and peer down under the car?

The train starts—and a hundred crowded prisoner destinies, tormented hearts, are borne along the same snaky rails, behind the same smoke, past the same fields, posts, and haystacks as you, and even a few seconds sooner than you. But outside your window even less trace of the grief which has flashed past is left in the air than fingers leave in water. And in the familiar life of the train, which is always exactly the same—with its slit-openable package of bed linen, and tea served in glasses with metal holders—could you possibly grasp what a dark and suppressed horror has been borne through the same sector of Euclidean space just three seconds ahead of you? You are dissatisfied because there are four of you in your compartment and it is crowded. And could you possibly believe—and will you possibly believe when reading these lines—that in the same size compartment as yours, but up ahead in that zak car, there are fourteen people? And if there are twenty-five? And if there are thirty?

The *zak car*—what a foul abbreviation it is! As, for that matter, are all the executioners' abbreviations. They meant to indicate that this was a railroad car for prisoners—for *zaklyuchennye*. But nowhere, except in prison documents, has this term caught on and stuck. The prisoners got used to calling this kind of railroad car a *Stolypin* car, or, more simply, just a *Stolypin*.

As rail travel was introduced more widely in our Fatherland, prisoner transports changed their form. Right up to the nineties of the last century the Siberian prisoner transports moved on foot or by horse cart. As far back as 1896, Lenin traveled to Siberian exile in an ordinary third-class passenger car (with free people all around him) and shouted to the train crew that it was intolerably crowded. The painting by Yaroshenko which everyone knows, *Life Is Everywhere*, shows a fourth-class passenger car re-equipped in very naïve fashion for prisoner transport: everything has been left just as it was, and the prisoners are traveling just like ordinary people, except that double gratings have been installed on the windows. Cars of this type were used on Russian railroads for a very long time. And certain people remember being transported as prisoners in just such cars in 1927, except that the men and women were separated. On the other hand, the SR Trushin recalls that even during Tsarist times he was transported as a prisoner in a "Stolypin" car, except that —once again going back to legendary times—there were six people in a compartment.

Probably this type of railroad car really was first used under Stolypin, in other words before 1911. And in the general Cadet revolutionary embitterment, they christened it with his name. However, it really became the favorite means of prisoner transport only in the twenties; and it became the universal and exclusive means only from 1930 on, when everything in our life became uniform. Therefore it would be more correct to call it a *Stalin* car rather than a *Stolypin* car. But we aren't going to argue with the Russian language here.

The Stolypin car is an ordinary passenger car divided into compartments, except that five of the nine compartments are allotted to the prisoners (here, as everywhere in the Archipelago, half of everything goes to the auxiliary personnel, the guards), and compartments are separated from the corridor not by a solid

barrier but by a grating which leaves them open for inspection. This grating consists of intersecting diagonal bars, like the kind one sees in station parks. It rises the full height of the car, and because of it there are not the usual baggage racks projecting from the compartments over the corridor. The windows on the corridor sides are ordinary windows, but they have the same diagonal gratings on the outside. There are no windows in the prisoners' compartments—only tiny, barred blinds on the level of the second sleeping shelves. That's why the car has no exterior windows and looks like a baggage car. The door into each compartment is a sliding door: an iron frame with bars.

From the corridor side all this is very reminiscent of a menagerie: pitiful creatures resembling human beings are huddled there in cages, the floors and bunks surrounded on all sides by metal grilles, looking out at you pitifully, begging for something to eat and drink. Except that in menageries they never crowd the wild animals in so tightly.

According to the calculations of nonprisoner engineers, six people can sit on the bottom bunks of a Stolypin compartment, and another three can lie on the middle ones (which are joined in one continuous bunk, except for the space cut out beside the door for climbing up and getting down), and two more can lie on the baggage shelves above. Now if, in addition to these eleven, eleven more are pushed into the compartment (the last of whom are shoved out of the way of the door by the jailers' boots as they shut it), then this will constitute a normal complement for a Stolypin prisoners' compartment. Two huddle, half-sitting, on each of the upper baggage shelves; another five lie on the joined middle level (and they are the lucky ones—these places are won in battle, and if there are any prisoners present from the underworld companionship of thieves—the blatnye—then it is they who are lying there); and this leaves thirteen down below: five sit on each of the bunks and three are in the aisle between their legs. Somewhere, mixed up with the people, on the people and under the people, are their belongings. And that is how they sit, their crossed legs wedged beneath them, day after day.

No, it isn't done especially to torture people. A sentenced prisoner is a laboring soldier of socialism, so why should he be tortured? They need him for construction work. But, after all,

you will agree he is not off on a jaunt to visit his mother-in-law, and there is no reason in the world to treat him so well that people out in *freedom* would envy him. We have problems with our transportation: he'll get there all right, and he won't die on the way either.

Since the fifties, when railroad timetables were actually straightened out, the prisoners haven't had to travel in this fashion for very long at a time—say, a day and a half or two days. During and after the war, things were worse. From Petropavlovsk (in Kazakhstan) to Karaganda, a Stolypin car might be *seven days* en route (with twenty-five people in a compartment). From Karaganda to Sverdlovsk it could be *eight days* (with up to twenty-six in a compartment). Even just going from Kuibyshev to Chelyabinsk in August, 1945, Susi traveled in a Stolypin car for several days, and their compartment held *thirty-five* people lying on top of one another, floundering, fighting.[1] And in the autumn of 1946 N. V. Timofeyev-Ressovsky traveled from Petropavlovsk to Moscow in a compartment that had *thirty-six* people in it! For several days he *hung* suspended between other human beings and his legs did not touch the floor. Then they started to die off—and the guards hauled the corpses out from under their feet. (Not right away, true; only on the second day.) That way things became less crowded. The whole trip to Moscow continued in this fashion for *three weeks*.[2]

Was thirty-six the upper limit for a Stolypin compartment? I have no evidence available on thirty-seven or higher, and yet, adhering to our one-and-only scientific method, and remembering the necessity to struggle against "the limiters," we are compelled to reply: No, no, no! It is not a limit! Perhaps in some other country it would be an upper limit, but not here! As long as there are any cubic centimeters of unbreathed air left in the compartment, even if it be beneath the upper shelves, even if between shoulders, legs, and heads, the compartment is ready to take additional prisoners. One might, however, conditionally accept

1. Does this perhaps satisfy those who are astonished and reproachful because people *didn't fight?*

2. When he got to Moscow, a miracle took place in accordance with the laws of the country of miracles. *Officers* carried Timofeyev-Ressovsky from the prisoner transport in their arms, and he was driven away in an ordinary automobile: he was off to advance science!

as the upper limit the number of unremoved corpses which can be contained in the total volume of the compartment, given the possibility of packing them in at leisure.

V. A. Korneyeva traveled from Moscow in a compartment that held *thirty women*—most of them withered old women, exiled for their religious beliefs (on arrival *all* these women, except two, were immediately put in the hospital). Nobody died in the compartment because several of the prisoners were young, well-developed, good-looking girls, arrested "for going out with foreigners." These girls took it upon themselves to shame the convoy: "You ought to be ashamed to transport them this way! These are your own mothers!" It probably wasn't so much their moral argument as their attractive appearance which produced a reaction in the convoy guards, and they did move several of the old women out *—to the punishment cell.* But the punishment cell in a Stolypin car is no punishment; it is a blessing. Of five prisoner compartments, four are used as general cells, and the fifth is set aside and divided in two halves—two narrow half-compartments with one lower and one upper berth, like those the conductors have. These punishment cells serve to isolate prisoners; three or four travel in them at a time, and this gives both comfort and space.

No, it is not intentionally to torture them with thirst that the exhausted and overcrowded prisoners are fed not soup but salt herring or dry smoked Caspian carp for the whole of their trip in the Stolypin car. (This was exactly how it was in *all* the years, the thirties and the fifties, winter and summer, in Siberia and the Ukraine, and it isn't even necessary to cite examples.) It was not to torture them with thirst—but just you tell me what these ragamuffins were to be fed anyway while being moved around. They were not supposed to get hot meals in prisoner-transport railroad cars. (True, there was a kitchen in one of the Stolypin car compartments, but that was only for the convoy.) You couldn't just give the prisoners raw grits, and you couldn't give them raw codfish either, nor could you give them canned meat because they might stuff themselves. Herring was just the thing, with a piece of bread—and what else did they need?

Go ahead, take your half a herring while they are handing it out, and be glad you got it. If you're smart, you aren't going to eat that herring; just be patient, wait, hide it in your pocket,

and you can eat it at the next transit point where there is water to be had. It's worse when they issue you wet Sea of Azov anchovies, covered with coarse salt. You can't keep them in your pocket; so scoop them up in the flaps of your pea jacket, or in your handkerchief, in the palm of your hand—and eat them. They divide up these Azov anchovies on somebody's pea jacket, whereas the convoy guards dump the dried carp right on the floor of the compartment, and it is divided up on the benches, on the prisoners' knees.[3]

But once they've given you a fish, they aren't going to hold back on the bread, and maybe they'll even throw in a bit of sugar. Things are much worse when the convoy comes over and announces: "We aren't going to be feeding you today; *nothing was issued* for you." And it could very well be that nothing was actually issued: someone in one or another prison accounting office made a mistake in the figures. And it could also be that it was issued but that the convoy was short on rations—after all, they aren't exactly overfed either—and so they decided *to snag* a bit of your bread for themselves; and in that case to hand over half a herring by itself would seem suspicious.

And, of course, it is not for the purpose of intentionally torturing the prisoner that after his herring he is given neither hot water (and he never gets that here in any case) nor even plain, unboiled water. One has to understand the situation: The convoy staff is limited; some of them have to be on watch in the corridor; some are on duty on the platform; at the stations they clamber all over the car, under it, on top of it, to make sure that there aren't any holes in it. Others are kept busy cleaning guns, and then, of course, there has to be time for political indoctrination and their catechism on the articles of war. And the third shift is sleeping. They insist on their full eight hours—for, after all, the war is over. And then, to go carry water in pails—it has to be hauled a long

3. P. F. Yakubovich (*V Mire Otverzhennykh* [*In the World of the Outcasts*], Vol. 1, Moscow, 1964), writing about the nineties of the last century, recounts that in those terrible years they gave out ten-kopecks-a-day mess money per person in Siberian prisoner transports, when the price of a loaf of wheat bread (weighing ten and a half ounces?) was five kopecks; a pot of milk (two quarts?) three kopecks. "The prisoners were simply in clover," he writes. But then in Irkutsk Province the prices were higher. A pound of meat cost ten kopecks there and the "prisoners were simply famished!" One pound of meat per day per person—it's not half a herring, is it?

way, too, and it's insulting: why should a Soviet soldier have to carry water like a donkey for enemies of the people? And there are also times when they spend half a day hauling the Stolypin cars way out from the station in order to reshuffle or recouple the cars (it will be farther away from prying eyes), and the result is that you can't get water even for your own Red Army mess. True, there is one way out. You can go dip up some water from the locomotive tender. It's yellow and murky, with some lubricating grease mixed in with it. But the zeks will drink it willingly. It doesn't really matter that much anyway, since it isn't as if they could see what they are drinking in the semidarkness of their compartment. They don't have their own window, and there isn't any light bulb there either, and what light they get comes from the corridor. And there's another thing too: it takes a long time to dole out that water. The zeks don't have their own mugs. Whoever did have one has had it taken away from him—so what it adds up to is that they have to be given the two government issue mugs to drink out of, and while they are drinking up you have to keep standing there and standing, and dipping it out and dipping it out some more and handing it to them. (Yes, and then, too, the prisoners argue about who's to drink first; they want the healthy prisoners to drink first, and only then those with tuberculosis, and last of all those with syphilis! Just as if it wasn't going to begin all over again in the next cell: first the healthy ones . . .)

But the convoy could have borne with all that, hauled the water, and doled it out, if only those pigs, after slurping up the water, didn't ask to go to the toilet. So here's the way it all works out: if you don't give them water for a day, then they don't ask to go to the toilet. Give them water once, and they go to the toilet once; take pity on them and give them water twice—and they go to the toilet twice. So it's pure and simple common sense: just don't give them anything to drink.

And it isn't that one is stingy about taking them to the toilet because one wants to be stingy about the use of the toilet itself, but because taking prisoners to the toilet is a responsible—even, one might say, a combat—operation: it takes a long, long time for one private first class and two privates. Two guards have to be stationed, one next to the toilet door, the other in the corridor on the opposite side (so that no one tries to escape in that direc-

tion), while the private first class has to push open and then shut the door to the compartment, first to admit the returning prisoner, and then to allow the next one out. The statutes permit letting out only one at a time, so that they don't try to escape and so that they can't start a rebellion. Therefore, the way it works out is that the one prisoner who has been let out to go to the toilet is holding up 30 others in his own compartment and 120 in the whole car, not to mention the convoy detail! And so the command resounds: "Come on there, come on! Get a move on, get a move on!" The private first class and the soldiers keep hurrying him all the way there and back and he hurries so fast that he stumbles, and it's as though they think he is going to steal that shithole from the state. (In 1949, traveling in a Stolypin car between Moscow and Kuibyshev, the one-legged German Schultz, having understood the Russian hurry-up by this time, jumped to the toilet and back on his one leg while the convoy kept laughing and ordering him to go faster. During one such trip, one of the convoy guards pushed him when he reached the platform at the end of the corridor, and Schultz fell down on the floor in front of the toilet. The convoy guard went into a rage and began to beat him, while Schultz, who couldn't get up because of the blows raining down on him, crawled and crept into the dirty toilet. The rest of the convoy roared with laughter.)[4]

So that the prisoner shouldn't attempt to escape during the moment he was in the toilet, and also for a faster turnaround, the door to the toilet was not closed, and the convoy guard, watching the process from the platform of the car, could encourage it: "Come on, come on now! That's plenty, that's enough for you!" Sometimes the orders came before you even started: "All right, number one only!" And that meant that from the platform they'd prevent your doing anything else. And then, of course, you couldn't wash your hands. There was never enough water in the tank there, and there wasn't enough time either. If the prisoner even so much as touched the plunger of the washstand, the convoy guard would roar: "Don't you touch that, move along." (And if someone happened to have soap or a towel among his belongings, he wouldn't dare take it out anyway, simply out of shame:

4. This, it seems, is what is meant by the phrase "Stalin's cult of personality"?

that would really be *acting like a sucker.*) The toilet was filthy. Quicker, quicker! And tracking back the liquid mess on his shoes, the prisoner would be shoved back into the compartment, where he would climb up over somebody's arms and shoulders, and then, from the top row, his dirty shoes would dangle to the middle row and drip.

When women were taken to the toilet, the statutes of the convoy service, and common sense as well, required that the toilet door be kept open, but not every convoy insisted on this and some allowed the door to be shut: Oh, all right, go ahead and shut it. (Later on one of the women was sent in to wash out the toilet, and the guard again had to stand right there beside her so that she didn't try to escape.)

And even at this fast tempo, visits to the toilet for 120 people would take more than two hours—more than a quarter of the entire shift for three convoy guards! And in spite of that, you still couldn't make them happy. In spite of that, some old sandpiper or other would begin to cry half an hour later and ask to go to the toilet, and, of course, he wouldn't be allowed to go, and then he would soil himself right there in the compartment, and once again that meant trouble for the private first class: the prisoner had to be forced to pick it up in his hands and carry it away.

So that was all there was to it: fewer trips to the toilet! And that meant less water, and less food too—because then they wouldn't complain of loose bowels and stink up the air; after all, how bad could it be? A man couldn't even breathe.

Less water! But they had to hand out the herring anyway, just as the regulations required! No water—that was a reasonable measure. No herring—that was a service crime.

No one, no one at all, ever set out to torture us on purpose! The convoy's actions were quite reasonable! But, like the ancient Christians, we sat there in the cage while they poured salt on our raw and bleeding tongues.

Also the prisoner-transport convoys did not often deliberately (though sometimes they did) mix the thieves—blatari—and nonpolitical offenders in with Article 58 politicals in the same compartment. But a particular situation existed: There were a great many prisoners and very few railroad cars and compartments, and

time was always short, and so when was there time enough to sort them out? One of the four compartments was kept for women, and if the prisoners in the other three were to be sorted out on one basis or another, the most logical basis would be by destination so that it would be easier to unload them.

After all, was it because Pontius Pilate wanted to humiliate him that Christ was crucified between two thieves? It just happened to be crucifixion day that day—and there was only one Golgotha, and time was short. And so *he was numbered with the transgressors.*

■

I am afraid even to think what I would have had to suffer if I had been in the position of a common convict. . . . The convoy and the transport officers dealt with me and my comrades with cautious politeness. . . . Being a political, I went to hard labor in relative comfort—on the transports, I had quarters separate from the criminal prisoners, and my pood—my thirty-six pounds—of baggage was moved about on a cart. . . .

. . . I left out the quotation marks around the above paragraph to enable the reader to understand things a little better. After all, quotation marks are always used either for irony or to set something apart. And without quotation marks the paragraph sounds wild, does it not?

It was written by P. F. Yakubovich about the nineties of the last century. His book was recently republished as a sermon on that dark and dismal age. We learn from it that even on a barge the political prisoners had special quarters and a special section set aside for their walks on deck. (The same thing appears in Tolstoi's *Resurrection,* in which, furthermore, an outsider, Prince Nekhlyudov, is allowed to visit the political prisoners in order to interview them.) And it was only because the *"magic word 'political'* had been left out by mistake" opposite Yakubovich's name on the list (his own words) that he was met at Ust-Kara "by the hard-labor inspector . . . like an ordinary criminal prisoner—rudely, provocatively, impudently." However, this misunderstanding was all happily cleared up.

What an unbelievable time! It was almost a crime to mix politi-

cals with criminals! Criminals were teamed up and driven along the streets to the station so as to expose them to public disgrace. And politicals could go there in carriages. (Olminsky, in 1899.) Politicals were not fed from the common pot but were given a food allowance instead and had their meals brought from public eating houses. The Bolshevik Olminsky didn't want even the hospital rations because he found the food too coarse.[5] The Butyrki Prison superintendent apologized to Olminsky for the jailer's having addressed him too familiarly: You see, we seldom get politicals here, and the jailer didn't know any better!

Seldom get politicals in the Butyrki? What kind of dream is this? Then where were they? The Lubyanka didn't exist as a prison at the time, and neither did Lefortovo!

The writer Radishchev was taken to the prisoner transport in shackles, and when the weather got cold they threw over him a "repulsive, raw sheepskin coat," which they had taken from a watchman. However, the Empress Catherine immediately issued orders that his shackles be removed and that he be provided with everything he required for his journey. But in November, 1927, Anna Skripnikova was sent on a transport from the Butyrki to the Solovetsky Islands in a straw hat and a summer dress. (That was what she had been wearing when she was arrested in the summer, and since that time her room had been sealed and no one was willing to give her permission to get her winter things out of it.)

To draw a distinction between political prisoners and common criminals is the equivalent of showing them respect as equal opponents, of recognizing that people may have *views of their own.* Thus a political prisoner is conscious of political *freedom* even when under *arrest.*

But since the time when we all became *KR's* and the socialists failed to retain their status as *politicals,* since then any protest that as a *political* you ought not to be mixed up with ordinary criminals has resulted only in laughter on the prisoners' part and bewilderment on the part of the jailers. "All are criminals here," the jailers reply—sincerely.

This mingling, this first devastating encounter, takes place either in the Black Maria or in the Stolypin car. Up to this

5. Because of all of this the ordinary criminal mob christened the professional revolutionaries "mangy swells." (P. F. Yakubovich.)

moment, no matter how they have oppressed, tortured, and tormented you during the interrogation, it has all originated with the bluecaps, and you have never confused them with human beings but have seen in them merely an insolent branch of the service. But at the same time, even if your cellmates have been totally different from you in development and experience, and even if you have quarreled with them, and even if they have *squealed on you,* they have all belonged to that same ordinary, sinful, everyday humanity among which you have spent your whole life.

When you were jammed into a Stolypin compartment, you expected that here, too, you would encounter only colleagues in misfortune. All your enemies and oppressors remained on *the other* side of the bars, and you certainly did not expect to find them on *this* side. And suddenly you lift your eyes to the square recess in the middle bunk, to that one and only heaven above you, and up there you see three or four—oh, no, not faces! They aren't monkey muzzles either, because monkeys' muzzles are much, much decenter and more thoughtful! No, and they aren't simply hideous countenances, since there must be something human even in them. You see cruel, loathsome snouts up there, wearing expressions of greed and mockery. Each of them looks at you like a spider gloating over a fly. Their web is that grating which imprisons you—and you have been had! They squinch up their lips, as if they intend to bite you from one side. They hiss when they speak, enjoying that hissing more than the vowel and consonant sounds of speech—and the only thing about their speech that resembles the Russian language is the endings of verbs and nouns. It is gibberish.

Those strange gorilloids were usually dressed in sleeveless undershirts. After all, it is stuffy in the Stolypin car. Their sinewy purple necks, their swelling shoulder muscles, their swarthy tattooed chests have never suffered prison emaciation. Who are they? Where do they come from? And suddenly you see a small cross dangling from one of those necks. Yes, a little aluminum cross on a string. You are surprised and slightly relieved. That means there are religious believers among them. How touching! So nothing terrible is going to happen. But immediately this "believer" belies both his cross and his faith by cursing (and they curse partly in Russian), and he jabs two protruding fingers,

spread into the "V" of a slingshot, right in your eyes—not even pausing to threaten you but starting to punch them out then and there. And this gesture of theirs, which says, "I'll gouge out your eyes, crowbait!" covers their entire philosophy and faith! If they are capable of crushing your eyeballs like worms, what is there on you or belonging to you that they'll spare? The little cross dangles there and your still unsquashed eyes watch this wildest of masquerades, and your whole system of reckoning goes awry: Which of you is already crazy? And who is about to go insane?

In one moment, all the customs and habits of human intercourse you have lived with all your life have broken down. In your entire previous life, particularly before your arrest but even to some degree afterward, even to some degree during interrogation, too, you spoke *words* to other people and they answered you in *words*. And those words produced actions. One might persuade, or refuse, or come to an agreement. You recall various human relationships—a request, an order, an expression of gratitude. But what has overtaken you here is beyond all these words and beyond all these relationships. An emissary of the ugly snout descends, most often a vicious boy whose impudence and rudeness are thrice despicable, and this little demon unties your bag and rifles your pockets—not tentatively, but treating them like his very own. From that moment, nothing that belongs to you is yours any longer. And all you yourself are is a rubber dummy around which superfluous things are wrapped which can easily be taken off. Nor can you explain anything in words, nor deny, nor prohibit, nor plead with that evil little skunk or those foul snouts up above. They are not people. This has become clear to you in one moment. The only thing to be done with them is to *beat* them, to beat them without wasting any time flapping your tongue. Either that juvenile there or those bigger vermin up above.

But how can you hit those three up top from down below? And the kid there, even though he's a stinking polecat, well, it doesn't seem right to hit him either. Maybe you can push him away soft like? No, you can't even do that, because he'll bite your nose right off, or else they'll break your head from above (and they have knives, too, but they aren't going to bother to pull them out and soil them on you).

You look at your neighbors, your comrades: Let's either resist

or protest! But all your comrades, all your fellow Article 58's, who have been plundered one by one even before you got there, sit there submissively, hunched over, and they stare right past you, and it's even worse when they look at you the way they always do look at you, as though no violence were going on at all, no plundering, as though it were a natural phenomenon, as though it were the grass growing and the rain falling.

And the reason why, gentlemen, comrades, and brothers, is that the proper time was allowed to slip by! You ought to have got hold of yourselves and remembered who you were back when Struzhinsky burned himself alive in his Vyatka cell, and even before that, when you were declared "counterrevolutionaries."

And so you allow the thieves to take your overcoat and paw through your jacket and snatch your twenty rubles from where it was sewn in, and your bag has already been tossed up above and checked out, and everything your sentimental wife collected for your long trip after you were sentenced stays up there, and they've thrown the bag back down to you with . . . your toothbrush.

Although not everyone submitted just like that, 99 percent did in the thirties and forties.[6] And how could that be? Men, officers, soldiers, front-line soldiers!

To strike out boldly, a person has to be ready for that battle, waiting for it, and has to understand its purpose. All these conditions were absent here. A person wholly unfamiliar with the thieves'—the blatnoi—milieu didn't anticipate this battle and, most importantly, failed totally to understand its vital necessity. Up to this point he had assumed (incorrectly) that his only enemies were the bluecaps. He needed still more education to arrive at the understanding that the tattooed chests were merely the rear ends of the bluecaps. This was the revelation the bluecaps never utter aloud: "You today, me tomorrow." The new prisoner wanted to consider himself a political—in other words, on the side of the people—while the state was against the people. And at that point he was unexpectedly assaulted from behind and both sides by quick-fingered devils of some kind, and all the

6. I have heard of a few cases in which three seasoned, young, and healthy men stood up against the thieves—not to defend justice in general, but to protect, not those who were being plundered right next to them, but themselves only. In other words: armed neutrality.

categories got mixed up, and clarity was shattered into fragments. (And it would take a long time for the prisoner to put two and two together and figure out that this horde of devils were hand in glove with the jailers.)

To strike out boldly, a person has to feel that his rear is defended, that he has support on both his flanks, that there is solid earth beneath his feet. All these conditions were absent for the Article 58's. Having passed through the meat grinder of political interrogation, the human being was physically crushed in body: he had been starved, he hadn't slept, he had frozen in punishment cells, he had lain there a beaten man. But it wasn't only his body. His soul was crushed too. Over and over he had been told and had had demonstrated to him that his views, and his conduct in life, and his relationships with people had all been wrong because they had brought him to ruin. All that was left in that scrunched-up wad the engine room of the law had spewed out into the prisoner transport was a greed for life, and no understanding whatever. To crush him once and for all and *to cut him off from all others* once and for all—that was the function of interrogation under Article 58. The convicted prisoner had to learn that his worst guilt out in freedom had been his attempt somehow to get together or unite with others by any route but the Party organizer, the trade-union organizer, or the administration. In prison this fear went so far as to become fear of all kinds of *collective action:* two voices uttering the same complaint or two prisoners signing a complaint on one piece of paper. Gun-shy now and for a good long time to come of any and every kind of collaboration or unification, the pseudo politicals were not prepared to unite even against the thieves. Nor would they even think of bringing along a weapon—a knife or a bludgeon—for the Stolypin car or the transit prison. In the first place, why have one? And against whom? In the second place, if you did use it, then, considering the aggravating circumstance of your malevolent Article 58, you might be shot when you were retried. In the third place, even before that, your punishment for having a knife when they searched you would be very different from the thief's. For him to have a knife was mere misbehavior, tradition, he didn't know any better. But for you to have one was "terrorism."

Finally, many of the people imprisoned under Article 58 were

peaceful people (very often elderly, too, and often ill), and they had gotten along all their lives with words and without resorting to fisticuffs, and they weren't any more prepared for them now than they had been before.

Nor had the thieves ever been put through the same kind of interrogation. Their entire interrogation had consisted of two sessions, an easy trial, and an easy sentence, and they wouldn't have to serve it out. They would be released ahead of time: either they would be amnestied or else they would simply escape.[7] Even during interrogation, no one ever deprived a thief of his legitimate parcels—consisting of abundant packages from the loot kept by his underworld comrades who were still on the loose. He never grew thin, was never weak for a single day, and in transit he ate at the expense of the innocent nonthieves, whom he called, in his own jargon, the frayera[8]—"frayers," or "innocents," or "suckers." Not only did the articles of the Code dealing with thieves and bandits not oppress the thief; he was, in fact, proud of his convictions under them. And he was supported in this pride by all the chiefs in blue shoulder boards and blue piping. "Oh, that's nothing. Even though you're a bandit and a murderer, you are not a traitor of the Motherland, you *are one of our own people;* you will reform." There was no *Section Eleven*—for organization—in the thieves' articles in the Code. Organization was not forbidden the thieves. And why should it be? Let it help develop in them the feelings of collectivism that people in our society need so badly. And disarming them was just a game. They weren't punished for having a weapon. Their thieves' *law* was respected ("They can't be anything but what they are"). And a new murder in the cell would not increase a murderer's sentence, but instead would bring him new laurels.

And all that went very deep indeed. In works of the last century, the lumpenproletariat was criticized for little more than a certain lack of discipline, for fickleness of mood. And Stalin was always partial to the thieves—after all, who robbed the banks for

7. V. I. Ivanov (now from Ukhta) got Article 162 (thievery) nine times and Article 82 (escape) five times, for a total of thirty-seven years in prison—and he "served out" five to six years for all of them.

8. "Frayer" is a blatnoi—underworld—word meaning *nonthief*—in other words, not a *Chelovek* ("Human being," with a capital letter). Well, even more simply: the *frayera* were all nonthief, nonunderworld mankind.

him? Back in 1901 his comrades in the Party and in prison accused him of using common criminals against his political enemies. From the twenties on, the obliging term *"social ally"* came to be widely used. That was Makarenko's contention too: *these* could be reformed. According to Makarenko, the origin of crime lay solely in the "counterrevolutionary underground."[9] (*Those* were the ones who couldn't be reformed—engineers, priests, SR's, Mensheviks.)

And why shouldn't they steal, if there was no one to put a stop to it? Three or four brazen thieves working hand in glove could lord it over several dozen frightened and cowed pseudo politicals.

With the approval of the administration. On the basis of the Progressive Doctrine.

But even if they didn't drive off the thieves with their fists, why didn't the victims at least make complaints? After all, every sound could be heard in the corridor, and a convoy guard was marching slowly back and forth right out there.

Yes, that is a question! Every sound and every complaining cry can be heard, and the convoy just keeps marching back and forth—why doesn't he interfere? Just a yard away from him, in the half-dark cave of the compartment, they are plundering a human being—why doesn't the soldier of the government police interfere?

For the very same reason: he, too, has been indoctrinated.

Even more than that: after many years of favoring thieves, the convoy has itself slipped in their direction. The convoy *has itself become a thief.*

From the middle of the thirties until the middle of the forties, during that ten-year period of the thieves' most flagrant debauches and most intense oppression of the politicals, no one at all can recall a case in which a convoy guard intervened in the plundering of a political in a cell, in a railroad car, or in a Black Maria. But they will tell you of innumerable cases in which the convoy accepted stolen goods from the thieves and, in return, bought them vodka, snacks (sweeter than the rations, too), and smokes. The examples are so numerous as to be typical.

The convoy sergeant, after all, hasn't anything either: he has his gun, his greatcoat roll, his mess tin, his soldier's ration. It

9. A. S. Makarenko, *Flagi na Bashnyakh* (*Flags on the Towers*).

would be cruel to require him to escort an enemy of the people in an expensive overcoat or chrome-leather boots or with a *swag* of luxurious city articles—and to reconcile himself to that inequality. Was not taking these things just one additional form of the class struggle, after all? And what other norms were there?

In 1945–1946, when prisoners streamed in not just from anywhere but from Europe, and wore and had in their bags unheard-of European articles, even the convoy officers could not restrain themselves. Their service had kept them from the front, but at the end of the war it also kept them from the harvest of booty—and, I ask you, was that just?

And so, in these circumstances, the convoy guard systematically mixed the thieves and the politicals in each compartment of their Stolypin, not through lack of space for them elsewhere and not through haste, but out of greed. And the thieves did not let them down: they stripped the *beavers*[10] of everything, and then those possessions migrated into the suitcases of the convoy.

But what could be done if the *beavers* had been loaded into the Stolypin cars, and the train was moving, and there simply weren't any thieves at all—they simply hadn't put any aboard? What if they weren't being shipped out on prisoner transports that day, even from one of the stations along the way? This could and did happen—several such cases are known.

In 1947 they were transporting from Moscow to the Vladimir Central Prison a group of foreigners who had opulent possessions —as could be seen the very first time their suitcases were opened. At that point, the convoy *itself* began a systematic confiscation of their belongings right there in the railroad car. So that nothing should be missed, the prisoners were forced to undress *down to their bare skin* and to sit on the floor of the car near the toilet while their things were examined and taken away. But the convoy guard failed to take into account that they were taking these prisoners not to a camp but to a genuine prison. On their arrival there, I. A. Korneyev handed in a written complaint, describing exactly what had happened. They found the particular unit of convoy guards and searched them. Some of the things were

10. A *beaver* in the blatnoi—underworld—jargon was any rich zek who had "trash"—meaning good clothes—and "bacilli"—meaning fats, sugar, and other goodies.

recovered and returned to their owners, who also received compensation in money for those that weren't recovered. They say that the convoy guards got from ten to fifteen years. However, this is something that cannot be checked, and anyway they would have been convicted under an ordinary nonpolitical article of the Code, and they wouldn't have had to spend a long time in prison.

However, that was an exceptional case, and if he had managed to restrain his greed in time, the chief of the convoy would have realized that it was better not to get involved in it. And here is another, less complicated case, which probably means that it happened often. In August, 1945, in the Moscow-Novosibirsk Stolypin car (in which A. Susi was being transported), it turned out that there weren't any thieves. And the trip was a long one, and the Stolypins just crawled along at that time. Without hurrying in the least, all in good time, the convoy chief declared a search—one prisoner at a time in the corridor with his things. Those summoned were made to undress in accordance with prison rules, but that wasn't why the search was being conducted, for each prisoner who had been searched was, in fact, put right back into his own crowded compartment, and any knife, anything forbidden, could simply have been passed from hand to hand. The real purpose of the search was to examine their personal articles —the clothes they were wearing and whatever was in their bags. And right there, beside the bags, not in the least bored by the whole protracted search, the chief of the convoy guard, an officer, stood with a haughty poker face, with his assistant, a sergeant, beside him. Sinful greed kept trying to pop out, but the officer kept it hidden under a pretended indifference. It was the same situation as an old rake looking over little girls but embarrassed by the presence of outsiders—yes, and by that of the girls too—and not knowing exactly how to proceed. How badly he needed just a few thieves! But there were no thieves in the transport.

There were no thieves aboard, but there were individuals among the prisoners who had already been infected by the thief-laden atmosphere of the prison. After all, the example of thieves is instructive and calls forth imitations: it demonstrates that there is an easy way to live in prison. Two recent officers were in one of the compartments—Sanin (from the navy) and Merezhkov. They were both 58's, but their attitudes had already changed. Sanin,

with Merezhkov's support, proclaimed himself the monitor of the compartment and, through a convoy guard, requested a meeting with their chief. (He had fathomed that haughtiness and its need of a pimp!) This was unheard of, but Sanin was summoned, and they had a chat somewhere. Following Sanin's example, someone in the second compartment also asked for a meeting. And that person was similarly received.

And the next morning they issued not twenty ounces of bread —the prisoner-transport ration at the time—but no more than nine ounces.

They gave out the ration, and a quiet murmur began. A murmur, but in fear of any "collective action," these politicals did not speak up. In the event, only one among them loudly asked the guard distributing the bread: "Citizen chief! How much does this ration weigh?"

"The correct weight," he was told.

"I demand a reweighing; otherwise I will not accept it!" the dissatisfied prisoner declared loudly.

The whole car fell silent. Many waited before beginning to eat their ration; expecting that theirs, too, would be reweighed. And at that moment, in all his spotlessness, the officer appeared. Everyone fell silent, which made his words all the weightier and all the more irresistible.

"Which one here spoke out against the Soviet government?"

All hearts stopped beating. (People will protest that this is a universal approach, that even out in freedom every little chief declares himself to be the Soviet government, and just try to argue with him about it. But for those who are panicky, who have just been sentenced for anti-Soviet propaganda, the threat is more frightening.)

"Who was starting *a mutiny* over the bread ration?" the officer demanded.

"Citizen lieutenant, I only wanted . . ." The guilty rebel was already trying to explain it all away.

"Aha, you're the bastard? You're the one who doesn't like the Soviet government?"

(And why rebel? Why argue? Wasn't it really easier to eat that little underweight ration, to suffer it in silence? And now he had fallen right in it!)

"You stinking shit! You counterrevolutionary! You ought to be hanged, and you have the nerve to demand that the bread ration be reweighed! You rat—the Soviet government gives you food and drink, and you have the brass to be dissatisfied? Do you know what you're going to get for that?"

Orders to the guard: "Take him out!" The lock rattles. "Come on out, you! Hands behind your back!" They bring out the unfortunate.

"Now who else is dissatisfied? Who else wants his bread ration reweighed?"

(And it's not as if you could prove anything anyway. It's not as if they'd take your word against the lieutenant's if you were to complain somewhere that there were only nine ounces instead of twenty.)

It's quite enough to show a well-beaten dog the whip. All the rest turned out to be satisfied, and that was how the penalty ration was confirmed for *all the days* of the long journey. And they began to withhold the sugar too. The convoy had appropriated it.

(And this took place during the summer of our two great victories—over Germany and Japan—victories which embellish the history of our Fatherland and which our grandsons and great-grandsons will learn about in school.)

The prisoners went hungry for a day and then a second day, by which time several of them began to get a bit wiser, and Sanin said to his compartment: "Look, fellows: If we go on this way, we're lost. Come on now, all of you who have some good stuff with you, let me have it, and I'll trade it for something to eat." With great self-assurance he accepted some articles and turned down others. (Not all the prisoners were willing to let their things go—and, you see, no one forced them to either.) And then he and Merezhkov asked to be allowed to leave the compartment, and, strangely enough, the convoy let them out. Taking the things, they went off toward the compartment of the convoy guard, and they returned from there with sliced loaves of bread and with makhorka. These very loaves constituted the eleven ounces missing from the daily rations. Now, however, they were not distributed on an equal basis but went only to those who had handed over their belongings.

And that was quite fair: after all, they had all admitted they

were satisfied with the reduced bread ration. It was also fair because the belongings were, after all, worth something, and it was right that they should be paid for. And it was also fair in the long view because those things were simply too good for camp and were destined anyway to be taken away or stolen there.

The makhorka had belonged to the guard. The soldiers shared their precious makhorka with the prisoners. And that was fair, too, since they had eaten the prisoners' bread and drunk up their sugar, which was too good for enemies anyway. And, last, it was only fair, too, that Sanin and Merezhkov took the largest share for themselves even though they'd contributed nothing—because without them all this would not have been arranged.

And so they sat crammed in there, in the semidarkness, and some of them chewed on their neighbors' chunks of bread and their neighbors sat there and watched them. The guard permitted smoking only on a collective basis, every two hours—and the whole car was as filled with smoke as if there'd been a fire. Those who at first had clung to their things now regretted that they hadn't given them to Sanin and asked him to take them, but Sanin said he'd only take them later on.

This whole operation wouldn't have worked so well and so thoroughly had it not been for the slow trains and slow Stolypin cars of the immediate postwar years, when they kept unhitching them from one train and hitching them to another and held them waiting in the stations. And, at the same time, if it hadn't been the immediate postwar period, neither would there have been those greed-inspiring belongings. Their train took a week to get to Kuibyshev—and during that entire week they got only nine ounces of bread a day. (This, to be sure, was twice the ration distributed during the siege of Leningrad.) And they did get dried Caspian carp and water, in addition. They had to ransom their remaining bread ration with their personal possessions. And soon the supply of these articles exceeded the demand, and the convoy guards became very choosy and reluctant to take more things.

They were received at the Kuibyshev Transit Prison, given baths, and returned as a group to that very same Stolypin. The convoy which took them over was new—but, in passing on the relay baton, the previous crew had evidently told them how to put the squeeze on, and the very same system of ransoming their

own rations functioned all the way to Novosibirsk. (It is easy to see how this infectious experiment might have spread rapidly through whole units of the convoy guards.)

And when they were unloaded on the ground between the tracks in Novosibirsk, some new officer came up and asked them: "Any complaints against the convoy?" And they were all so confused that nobody answered.

The first chief of convoy had calculated accurately—this was Russia!

■

Another factor which distinguishes Stolypin passengers from the rest of the train is that they do not know where their train is going and at what station they will disembark: after all, they don't have tickets, and they don't read the route signs on the cars. In Moscow, they sometimes load them on so far from the station platform that even the Muscovites among them don't know which of the eight Moscow stations they are at. For several hours the prisoners sit all squeezed together in the stench while they wait for a switching engine. And finally it comes and takes the zak car to the already made-up train. If it is summertime, the station loudspeakers can be heard: "Moscow to Ufa departing from Track 3. Moscow to Tashkent still loading at Platform 1 . . ." That means it's the Kazan Station, and those who know the geography of the Archipelago are now explaining to their comrades that Vorkuta and Pechora are out: *they* leave from the Yaroslavl Station; and the Kirov and Gorky camps[11] are out too. They never send people from Moscow to Byelorussia, the Ukraine, or the Caucasus anyway. They have no room there even for their own. Let's listen some more: the Ufa train has left, and ours hasn't moved. The Tashkent train has started, and we're still here. "Moscow to Novosibirsk departing. All those seeing passengers off, disembark. . . . All passengers show their tickets. . . ." We have started.

11. Thus it is that weeds get into the harvest of fame. But are they weeds? After all, there are no Pushkin, Gogol, or Tolstoi camps—but there are Gorky camps, and what a nest of them too! Yes, and there is a separate mine "named for Maxim Gorky" (twenty-five miles from Elgen in the Kolyma)! Yes, Aleksei Maximovich Gorky . . . "with your heart and your name, comrade . . ." If the enemy does not surrender . . . You say one reckless little word, and look—you're not in literature any longer.

Our train! And what does that prove? Nothing so far. The middle Volga area is still open, and the South Urals. And Kazakhstan with the Dzhezkazgan copper mines. And Taishet, with its factory for creosoting railroad ties (where, they say, creosote penetrates the skin and bones and its vapors fill the lungs—and that is death). All Siberia is still open to us—all the way to Sovetskaya Gavan. The Kolyma too. And Norilsk.

And if it is wintertime, the car is battened down and the loudspeakers are inaudible. If the convoy guards obey their regulations, then you'll hear nary a whisper from them about the route either. And thus we set out, and, entangled in other bodies, fall asleep to the clacking of the wheels without knowing whether we will see forest or steppe through the window tomorrow. Through that window in the corridor. From the middle shelf, through the grating, the corridor, the two windowpanes, and still another grating, you can still see some switching tracks and a piece of open space hurtling by the train. If the windowpanes have not frosted over, you can sometimes even read the names of the stations—some Avsyunino or Undol. Where are these stations? No one in the compartment knows. Sometimes you can judge from the sun whether you are being taken north or east. Or at some place called Tufanovo, they might shove some dilapidated nonpolitical offender into your compartment, and he would tell you he was being taken to Danilov to be tried and was scared he'd get a couple of years. In this way you would find out that you'd gone through Yaroslavl that night, which meant that the first transit prison on your route would be Vologda. And some know-it-alls in the compartment would savor gloomily the famous flourish, stressing all the "o's," of the Vologda guards: "The Vologda convoy guards don't joke!"

But even after figuring out the general direction, you still haven't really found out anything: transit prisons lie in clusters on your route, and you can be shunted off to one side or another from any one of them. You don't fancy Ukhta, nor Inta, nor Vorkuta. But do you think that Construction Project 501—a railroad in the tundra, crossing northern Siberia—is any sweeter? It is worse than any of them.

Five years after the war, when the waves of prisoners had finally settled within the river banks (or perhaps they had merely

expanded the MVD staffs?), the Ministry sorted out the millions of piles of *cases* and started sending along with each sentenced prisoner a sealed envelope that contained his *case file* and, visible through a slot in the envelope, his route and destination, inserted for the convoy (and the convoy wasn't supposed to know anything more than that—because the contents of the *file* might have a corrupting influence). So then, if you were lying on the middle bunk, and the sergeant stopped right next to you, and you could read upside down, you might be fast enough to read that someone was being taken to Knyazh-Pogost and that you were being sent to Kargopol.

So now there would be more worries! What was Kargopol Camp? Who had ever heard of it? What kind of *general-assignment* work did they have there? (There did exist general-assignment work which was fatal, and some that was not that bad.) Was this a death camp or not?

And then how had you failed to let your family know in the hurry of leaving, and they thought you were still in the Stalinogorsk Camp near Tula? If you were very nervous about this and very inventive, you might succeed in solving that problem too: you might find someone with a piece of pencil lead half an inch long and a piece of crumpled paper. Making sure the convoy doesn't see you from the corridor (you are forbidden to lie with your feet toward the corridor; your head has to be in that direction), hunched over and facing in the opposite direction, you write to your family, between lurches of the car, that you have suddenly been taken from where you were and are being sent somewhere else, and you might be able to send only one letter a year from your new destination, so let them be prepared for this eventuality. You have to fold your letter into a triangle and carry it to the toilet in the hope of a lucky break: they might just take you there while approaching a station or just after passing a station, and the convoy guard on the car platform might get careless, and you can quickly press down on the flush pedal and, using your body as a shield, throw the letter into the hole. It will get wet and soiled, but it might fall right through and land between the rails. Or it might even get through dry, and the draft beneath the car will catch and whirl it, and it will fall under the wheels or miss them and land on the downward slope of the

embankment. Perhaps it will lie there until it rains, until it snows, until it disintegrates, but perhaps a human hand will pick it up. And if this person isn't a stickler for the Party line, he will make the address legible, he will straighten out the letters, or perhaps put it in an envelope, and perhaps the letter will even reach its destination. Sometimes such letters do arrive—postage due, half-blurred, washed out, crumpled, but carrying a clearly defined splash of grief.

■

But it is better still to stop as soon as possible being a *sucker*—that ridiculous greenhorn, that prey, that victim. The chances are ninety-five out of a hundred that your letter won't get there. But even if it does, it will bring no happiness to your home. And you won't be measuring your life and breath by hours and days once you have entered this epic country: arrivals and departures here are separated by decades, by a quarter-century. *You will never return* to your former world. And the sooner you get used to being without your near and dear ones, and the sooner they get used to being without you, the better it will be. And the easier!

And keep as few things as possible, so that you don't have to fear for them. Don't take a suitcase for the convoy guard to crush at the door of the car (when there are twenty-five people in a compartment, what else could he figure out to do with it?). And don't wear new boots, and don't wear fashionable oxfords, and don't wear a woolen suit: these things are going to be stolen, taken away, swept aside, or switched, either in the Stolypin car, or in the Black Maria, or in the transit prison. Give them up without a struggle—because otherwise the humiliation will poison your heart. They will take them away from you in a fight, and trying to hold onto your property will only leave you with a bloodied mouth. All those brazen snouts, those jeering manners, those two-legged dregs, are repulsive to you. But by owning things and trembling about their fate aren't you forfeiting the rare opportunity of observing and understanding? And do you think that the freebooters, the pirates, the great privateers, painted in such lively colors by Kipling and Gumilyev, were not simply these same

blatnye, these same thieves? That's just what they were. Fascinating in romantic literary portraits, why are they so repulsive to you here?

Understand them too! To them prison is *their native home.* No matter how fondly the government treats them, no matter how it softens their punishments, no matter how often it amnesties them, their inner destiny brings them back again and again. Was not the first word in the legislation of the Archipelago for them? In our country, the right to own private property was at one time just as effectively banished out *in freedom* too. (And then those who had banished it began to enjoy *possessing* things.) So why should it be tolerated in prison? You were too slow about it; you didn't eat up your fat bacon; you didn't share your sugar and tobacco with your friends. And so now the thieves empty your *bindle* in order to correct your moral error. Having given you their pitiful worn-out boots *in exchange* for your fashionable ones, their soiled coveralls in return for your sweater, they won't keep these things for long: your boots were merely something to lose and win back five times at cards, and they'll *hawk* your sweater the very next day for a liter of vodka and a round of salami. They, too, will have nothing left of them in one day's time —just like you. This is the principle of the second law of thermodynamics: all differences tend to level out, to disappear. . . .

Own nothing! Possess nothing! Buddha and Christ taught us this, and the Stoics and the Cynics. Greedy though we are, why can't we seem to grasp that simple teaching? Can't we understand that with property we destroy our soul?

So let the herring keep warm in your pocket until you get to the transit prison rather than beg for something to drink here. And did they give us a two-day supply of bread and sugar? In that case, eat it in one sitting. Then no one will steal it from you, and you won't have to worry about it. And you'll be free as a bird in heaven!

Own only what you can always carry with you: know languages, know countries, know people. Let your memory be your travel bag. Use your memory! Use your memory! It is those bitter seeds alone which might sprout and grow someday.

Look around you—there are people around you. Maybe you will remember one of them all your life and later eat your heart

out because you didn't make use of the opportunity to ask him questions. And the less you talk, the more you'll hear. Thin strands of human lives stretch from island to island of the Archipelago. They intertwine, touch one another for one night only in just such a clickety-clacking half-dark car as this and then separate once and for all. Put your ear to their quiet humming and the steady clickety-clack beneath the car. After all, it is the spinning wheel of life that is clicking and clacking away there.

What strange stories you can hear! What things you will laugh at.

Now that fast-moving little Frenchman over there near the grating—why does he keep twisting around, what is he so surprised at? Explain things to him! And you can ask him at the same time how he happened to land here. So you've found someone who knows French, and you learn that he is Max Santerre, a French soldier. And he used to be just as alert and curious out in freedom, in his douce France. They told him politely to stop hanging around the transit point for Russian repatriates, but he kept doing it anyway. And then the Russians invited him to have a drink with them, and from a certain moment after that he remembers nothing. He came to on the floor of an airplane to find himself dressed in a Red Army man's field shirt and britches, with the boots of a convoy guard looming over him. They told him he was sentenced to ten years in camp, but that, of course, as he very clearly understood, was just a nasty joke, wasn't it, and everything would be cleared up? Oh, yes, it will be cleared up, dear fellow; just wait.[12] Well, there was nothing to be surprised at in such cases in 1945–1946.

That particular story was Franco-Russian, and here is one which is Russo-French. But no, really just pure Russian, because no one but a Russian would play this kind of trick! Throughout our history there have been people *who just couldn't be contained,* like Menshikov in Berezovo in Surikov's painting. Now take Ivan Koverchenko, average height, wiry, and yet he couldn't be contained either. Because he was a stalwart fellow with a healthy countenance—but the devil threw in a bit of vodka for good measure. He would talk about himself quite willingly and

12. Ahead of him lay another sentence—for twenty-five years—that he was given in camp, and he would not get out of Ozerlag until 1957.

laugh at himself too. Such stories as his are a treasure. They are meant to be heard. True, it took a long time to figure out why he had been arrested and why he was considered a political. But there's no real need to make a fetish of the category "political" either. Does it matter a damn what rake they haul you in with?

As everyone knows very well, the Germans were preparing for chemical warfare and we weren't. Therefore, it was most unfortunate that because of some dunderheads in the quartermaster's department we left whole stacks of mustard-gas bombs at a certain airdrome when we fled the Kuban—and the Germans could have turned this fact into an international scandal. At that point, Senior Lieutenant Koverchenko, a native of Krasnodar, was assigned twenty parachutists and dropped behind the German lines to bury all those invidious bombs. (Those hearing this story have already guessed how it ends and are yawning: next he was taken prisoner, and he has now become a traitor of the Motherland. Nothing at all like that!) Koverchenko carried out his assignment brilliantly and returned through the front with his entire complement of men, having lost not one, and was nominated to receive the order of Hero of the Soviet Union.

But it takes a month or two for the official nomination to be confirmed—and what if you can't be contained within that Hero of the Soviet Union either? "Heroes" are awarded to quiet boys who are models of military and political preparedness—but what if your soul is afire and you want a drink, and there isn't anything to drink? And why, if you're a Hero of the whole Union, are the rats being so stingy as to refuse you an extra liter of vodka? And Ivan Koverchenko mounted his horse and, even though it's true that he had never heard of Caligula, he rode his horse upstairs to the second floor to see the city's military commissar—the commandant: Come on now, issue me some vodka. (He figured this would be more imposing, more in the style of a Hero, and harder to turn down.) Did they arrest him for that? No, of course not! But his award was reduced from Hero to the Order of the Red Banner.

Koverchenko had a large thirst, and vodka wasn't always available, and so he had to be inventive. In Poland, he had gone in and prevented the Germans from blowing up a certain bridge —and he got the feeling this bridge really belonged to him and so, for the time being, before our commandant's headquarters

arrived, he exacted payment from the Poles for crossing the bridge. After all, without me you wouldn't have this bridge, you pests! He collected tolls for a whole day (for vodka), and then got bored with it, and this wasn't in any case the place for him to stick around. So Captain Koverchenko offered the nearby Poles his equitable solution: that they *buy* the bridge from him. (Was he arrested for this! Nooo!) He didn't ask very much for it, but the Poles protested and refused. Pan Captain abandoned the bridge: All right then, to hell with you, take your bridge and cross it for nothing.

In 1949 he was chief of staff of a parachute regiment in Polotsk. Major Koverchenko was very much disliked by the Political Branch of the division because he had *failed* the political indoctrination course. He had once asked them to recommend him for admission to the Military Academy, but when they gave him the recommendation, he took one look at it and threw it back across the table at them: "With that kind of recommendation the place for me to go is not the Academy but to the *Banderovtsy* [the Ukrainian nationalist rebels]." (Was he arrested for that? He might very well have gotten a *tenner* for it, but he got away with it.) At that point, on top of all the rest, it turned out that he had given one of his men an unwarranted leave. And then he himself drove a truck at breakneck speed while drunk and wrecked it. And so they gave him ten—ten days in the guardhouse. However, his own men, who loved him with absolute devotion, were the guards, and they let him out of the guardhouse to go and have fun in the village. So he could have been patient through that guardhouse stretch too. But the Political Branch began to threaten him with a trial! Now that threat shocked and insulted Koverchenko; it meant: for burying bombs—Ivan, we need you; but for a lousy one-and-a-half-ton truck—off to prison with you? He crawled out the window at night, went over to the Dvina River, where a friend's motorboat was hidden, and off he went in it.

And it turned out that he wasn't just one more drunk with a short memory: he wanted to avenge himself for everything the Political Branch had done to him; and in Lithuania he left his boat and went to the Lithuanians, saying: "Brothers, take me to your partisans! Accept me and you won't be sorry; we'll twist their tails." But the Lithuanians decided he was being planted on them.

Ivan had a letter of credit sewn in his clothes. He got a ticket to the Kuban. However, en route to Moscow he got very drunk in a restaurant. Consequently, he squinched up his eyes at Moscow as they were leaving the station, and told the taxi driver: "Take me to an embassy!" "Which one?" "Who the hell cares? Any one." And the driver took him to one: "Which one is that?" "The French." "All right."

Perhaps his thoughts got mixed up, and his original intentions in going to an embassy had changed into something else, but his cleverness and his strength had in no wise lapsed: without alerting the policemen at the embassy entrance, he went quietly down a side street and climbed to the top of a smooth wall double a man's height. In the embassy yard it was easier: no one discovered him or detained him, and he went on inside, walked through one room, then another, and he saw a table set. There were many things on the table, but what astonished him most was the pears. He felt a yen for them, and he stuffed all the pockets in his field jacket and trousers with them. At that moment, the members of the household came in to dine. Koverchenko began to attack them and shout at them before they could begin on him: "You Frenchmen!" According to him, France hadn't done anything good for the last century. "Why don't you start a revolution? Why are you trying to get de Gaulle into power? And you want us to send our Kuban wheat to you? It's no go." "Who are you? Where did you come from?" The French were astounded. Immediately adopting the right approach, Koverchenko kept his wits about him: "A major of the MGB." The French were frightened. "But even so, you are not supposed to burst in here. What is your business here?" "——— you in the mouth!" Koverchenko bellowed at them straight from the heart. And, after playing the hoodlum for them a while longer, he noticed that in the next room they were already telephoning about him. He was still sober enough to begin his retreat, but the pears started to fall out of his pockets—and he was pursued by mocking laughter.

And in actual fact, he had enough strength left not only to leave the embassy safe and sound but to move on. The next morning he woke up in Kiev Station (was he not planning to go on to the West Ukraine?), and they soon picked him up there.

During his interrogation he was beaten by Abakumov personally. And the scars on his back swelled up to a hand's breadth.

The Minister beat him, of course, not because of the pears and not because of his valid rebuke to the French, but to find out by whom and when he had been recruited. And, of course, the prison term they handed him was twenty-five years.

There are many such stories, but like every railroad car, the Stolypin falls silent at night. At night there won't be any fish, nor water, nor going to the toilet.

And the car is filled then with the steady noise of the wheels, which doesn't in the least break the silence. And if, in addition, the convoy guard has left the corridor, one can talk quietly from the third compartment for men with the fourth, or women's, compartment.

A conversation with a woman in prison is quite special. There is something noble about it, even if one talks only about articles of the Code and prison terms.

One such conversation went on all night long, and here are the circumstances in which it took place. It was in July, 1950. There were no passengers in the women's compartment except for one young girl, the daughter of a Moscow doctor, sentenced under Article 58-10. And there was a big to-do in the men's compartment. The convoy guards began to drive all the zeks out of three compartments into two (and don't even ask how many they piled up in there). And they brought in some offender who was not at all like a convict. In the first place, he hadn't had his head shaved and his wavy blond locks, real *curls*, lay seductively on his big, thoroughbred head. He was young, dignified, and dressed in a British military uniform. He was escorted through the corridor with an air of deference (the convoy itself had been a little awed by the instructions on the envelope containing his *case file*). And the girl had managed to catch a glimpse of the whole episode. But he himself had not seen her. (And how much he regretted that later!)

From the noise and the commotion she realized that the compartment next to hers had been emptied for him. It was obvious that he was not supposed to communicate with anyone—all the more reason for her to want to talk with him. It wasn't possible in a Stolypin to see from one compartment into another, but when everything was still, you could hear between them. Late at night, when things had begun to quiet down, the girl sat on the

edge of her bunk, right up against the grating, and called to him quietly. (And perhaps she first sang softly. The convoy guard was supposed to punish her for all this, but the guard itself had settled down for the night, and there was no one in the corridor.) The stranger heard her and, following her instructions, sat in the same position. They were now sitting with their backs to each other, braced against the same one-inch partition, and speaking quietly through the grating at the outer edge of the partition. Their heads were as close as if their lips were kissing, but they could neither touch one another nor see each other.

Erik Arvid Andersen understood Russian tolerably well by this time, made many mistakes when he spoke it, but, in the end, could succeed in communicating his thoughts. He told the girl his astonishing story (and we, too, will hear about it at the transit prison center). She, in turn, told him the simple story of a Moscow student who had gotten 58-10. But Arvid was fascinated. He asked her about Soviet youth and about Soviet life, and what he heard was not at all what he had learned earlier in leftist Western newspapers and from his own official visit here.

They talked all night long. And that night everything came together for Arvid: the strange prisoners' car in an alien country; the rhythmic nighttime clicking of the wheels, which always finds an echo in our hearts; and the girl's melodic voice, her whispers, her breath reaching his ear—his very ear, yet he couldn't even look at her. (And for a year and a half he hadn't heard a woman's voice.)

And for the first time, through that invisible (and probably, and, of course, necessarily beautiful) girl, he began to see the real Russia, and the voice of Russia told him the truth all night long. One can learn about a country for the first time this way too. (And in the morning he would glimpse Russia's dark straw-thatched roofs through the window—to the sad whispering of his hidden guide.)

Yes, indeed, all this is Russia: the prisoners on the tracks refusing to voice their complaints, the girl on the other side of the Stolypin partition, the convoy going off to sleep, pears falling out of pockets, buried bombs, and a horse climbing to the second floor.

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"The gendarmes! The gendarmes!" the prisoners cried out happily. They were happy that they would be escorted the rest of the way by the attentive gendarmes and not by the convoy.

Once again I have forgotten to insert quotation marks. That was Korolenko who was telling us this.[13] We, it is true, were not happy to see the bluecaps. But anyone who ever got caught in what the prisoners christened the *pendulum* would have been glad to see even them.

An ordinary passenger might have a difficult time *boarding* a train at a small way station—but not getting off. Toss your things out and jump off. This was not the case with a prisoner, however. If the local prison guard or police didn't come for him or was late by even two minutes, toot-toot, the whistle would blow, and the train would get under way, and they would take the poor sinner of a prisoner all the way to the next transit point. And it was all right if it was actually a transit point that they took you to, because they would begin to feed you again there. But sometimes it was all the way to the end of the Stolypin's route, and then they would keep you for eighteen hours in an empty car and take you back with a whole new group of prisoners, and then once again, maybe, they wouldn't come for you—and once again you'd be in a blind alley, and once again you'd wait there and during all that time they *wouldn't feed you.* Your rations, after all, were issued only until your first stop, and the accounting office isn't to blame that the prison messed things up, for you are, after all, listed for Tulun. And the convoy isn't responsible for feeding you out of its own rations. So they swing you back and forth *six times* (it has actually happened!): Irkutsk to Krasnoyarsk, Krasnoyarsk to Irkutsk, Irkutsk to Krasnoyarsk, etc., etc., etc., and when you do see a blue visor on the Tulun platform, you are ready to throw your arms around him: Thank you, beloved, for saving me.

You get so worn down, so choked, so shattered in a Stolypin, even in two days' time, that before you get to a big city you

13. V. G. Korolenko, *Istoriya Moyego Sovremennika* (*A History of My Contemporary*), Moscow, 1955, Vol. III, p. 166.

yourself don't know whether you would rather keep going in torment just to get there sooner, or whether you'd rather be put in a transit prison to recover a little.

But the convoy guards begin to hustle and bustle. They come out with their overcoats on and knock their gunstocks on the floor. That means they are going to unload the whole car.

First the convoy forms up in a circle at the car steps, and no sooner have you dropped, fallen, tumbled down them, than the guards shout at you deafeningly in unison from all sides (as they have been taught): "Sit down, sit down, sit down!" This is very effective when several voices are shouting it at once and they don't let you raise your eyes. It's like being under shellfire, and involuntarily you squirm, hurry (and where is there for you to hurry to?), crouch close to the ground, and sit down, having caught up with those who disembarked earlier.

"Sit down!" is a very clear command, but if you are a new prisoner, you don't yet understand it. When I heard this command on the switching tracks in Ivanovo, I ran, clutching my suitcase in my arms (if a suitcase has been manufactured out in freedom and not in camp, its handle always breaks off and always at a difficult moment), and set it down on end on the ground and without looking around to see how the first prisoners were sitting, sat down on the suitcase. After all, to sit down right on the ties, on the dark oily sand, in my officer's coat, which was not yet so very dirty and which still had uncut flaps! The chief of the convoy—a ruddy mug, a good Russian face—broke into a run, and I hadn't managed to grasp what he wanted and why until I saw that he meant, clearly, to plant his sacred boot in my cursed back but something restrained him. However, he didn't spare his polished toe and kicked the suitcase and smashed in the top. "Sit down!" he gritted by way of explanation. Only at that point did it dawn on me that I towered over the surrounding zeks, and without even having the chance to ask: "How am I supposed to sit down?" I already understood how, and sat down in my precious coat, like everybody else, just as dogs sit at gates and cats at doors.

(I still have that suitcase, and even now when I chance to come upon it, I run my fingers around the hole torn in it. It is a wound which cannot heal as wounds heal on bodies or on hearts. Things have longer memories than people.)

And forcing prisoners to sit down was also a calculated maneuver. If you are sitting on your rear end on the ground, so that your knees tower in front of you, then your center of gravity is well back of your legs, and it is difficult to get up and impossible to jump up. And more than that, they would make us sit as tightly massed together as possible so that we'd be in each other's way. And if all of us wanted to attack the convoy together, they would have mowed us down before we got moving.

They had us sitting there to wait for the Black Maria (it transports the prisoners in batches, you couldn't get them all in at once), or else to be herded off on foot. They would try to sit us down someplace hidden so that fewer free people would see us, but at times they did make the prisoners sit right there awkwardly on the platform or in an open square. (That is how it was in Kuibyshev.) And it is a difficult experience for the free people: we stare at them quite freely and openly with a totally sincere gaze, but how are they supposed to look at us? With hatred? Their consciences don't permit it. (After all, only the Yermilovs believe that people were imprisoned "for cause.") With sympathy? With pity? Be careful, someone will take down your name and they'll set you up for a prison term too; it's that simple. And our proud free citizens (as in Mayakovsky: "Read it, envy me, I am a citizen") drop their guilty heads and try not to see us at all, as if the place were empty. The old women are bolder than the rest. You couldn't turn them bad. They believe in God. And they would break off a piece of bread from their meager loaf and throw it to us. And old camp hands—nonpolitical offenders, of course—weren't afraid either. All camp veterans knew the saying: "Whoever hasn't been there yet will get there, and whoever was there won't forget it." And look, they'd toss over a pack of cigarettes, hoping that someone might do the same for them during their next term. And the old woman's bread wouldn't quite carry far enough, what with her weak arm, and it would fall short, whereas the pack of cigarettes would arch through the air right into our midst, and the convoy guards would immediately work the bolts of their rifles—pointing them at the old woman, at kindness, at the bread: "Come on, old woman, run along."

And the holy bread, broken in two, was left to lie in the dust while we were driven off.

In general, those minutes of sitting on the ground there at the station were among our very best. I remember that in Omsk we were made to sit down on the railroad ties between two long freight trains. No one from outside entered this alleyway. (In all probability, they had stationed a soldier at either end: "You can't go in there." And even in freedom our people are taught to take orders from anyone in a uniform.) It began to grow dark. It was August. The oily station gravel hadn't yet completely cooled off from the sun and warmed us where we sat. We couldn't see the station, but it was very close by, somewhere behind the trains. A phonograph blared dance music, and the crowd buzzed in unison. And for some reason it didn't seem humiliating to sit on the ground in a crowded dirty mass in some kind of pen; and it wasn't a mockery to hear the dances of young strangers, dances we would never dance; to picture someone on the station platform meeting someone or seeing someone off—maybe even with flowers. It was twenty minutes of near-freedom: the twilight deepened, the first stars began to shine, there were red and green lights along the tracks, and the music kept playing. Life was going on without us—and we didn't even mind any more.

Cherish such moments, and prison will become easier to bear. Otherwise you will explode from rage.

And if it was dangerous to herd the zeks along to the Black Maria because there were streets and people right next to them, then the convoy statutes provided another good command: "Link arms!" There was nothing humiliating in this—link arms! Old men and boys, girls and old women, healthy people and cripples. If one of your hands is hanging onto your belongings, your neighbor puts his arm under that arm and you in turn link your other arm with your other neighbor's. So you have now been compressed twice as tightly as in ordinary formation, and you have immediately become heavier and are hampered by being thrown out of balance by your belongings and by your awkwardness with them, and you sway steadily as you limp. Dirty, gray, clumsy creatures, you move ahead like blind men with an ostensible tenderness for one another—a caricature of humanity.

It may well be that no Black Maria at all is there to fetch you. And the chief of convoy is perhaps a coward. He is afraid he will fail to deliver you safely—and in this state, weighed down,

jouncing as you go, knocking into things, you trudge all the way through the city to the prison itself.

There is one more command which is a caricature of geese: "Take hold of your heels!" This meant that anyone whose hands were free had to grab both his legs at about ankle height. And now: "Forward march." (Well, now, reader, put this book aside, try going around the room that way! How does it work? And at what speed? How much looking around could you do? And what about escaping?) Picture the way three or four dozen such geese look from the side. (Kiev, 1940.)

And it is not necessarily August out; it might be December, 1946, and, there being no Black Maria, you are being herded at 40 degrees below zero to the Petropavlovsk Transit Prison. And it is easy to guess that during the last hours before arriving the Stolypin convoy refused to go to the trouble of taking you to the toilet, so as to avoid getting it dirty. Weakened from interrogation, gripped by the cold, you have a very hard time holding it—women especially. Well, and so what! It's for horses to stand stock-still and loose the floodgates! It's for dogs to go lift a leg against a fence. But as for people, you can do it right there, while you keep moving. No need to be shy in your own fatherland. It will dry at the transit prison. . . . Vera Korneyeva stooped down to adjust her shoe and fell one step behind, and the convoy immediately set the police dog on her and the dog bit her in the buttocks through all her winter clothing. Don't fall behind! And an Uzbek fell down, and they beat him with their gunstocks and jackboots.

Well, that's no tragedy: it won't be photographed for the *Daily Express*. And the chief of convoy will live to a ripe old age and never be tried by anyone.

■

And the *Black Marias,* too, came down to us from history. In what respect does the prison carriage described by Balzac differ from a Black Maria? Only that the prison carriage was drawn along more slowly, and prisoners weren't packed so tightly.

True, in the twenties columns of prisoners were still being driven afoot through our cities, even Leningrad. They brought

traffic to a halt at intersections. ("So you got caught stealing?" came the reproaches from the sidewalks. No one had yet grasped the great plan for sewage disposal.)

But, always alert to technological trends, the Archipelago lost no time in adopting the *black ravens,* more familiarly known simply as *ravens*—Black Marias. These first Black Marias appeared at the same time as the very first trucks on our still cobblestoned streets. Their suspension was poor, and it was very rough riding in them, but then the prisoners weren't made of crystal either. On the other hand, they were very tightly corked even at that time, in 1927: there wasn't one little crack; and there wasn't one little electric light bulb, and there wasn't any air to breathe, and it was impossible to see out. And even in those days they stood so tightly packed inside that there wasn't any room left at all. And it wasn't that all this was intentionally planned; there simply weren't enough wheels to go around.

For many years the Black Marias were steel-gray and had, so to speak, prison written all over them. But in the biggest cities after the war they had second thoughts and decided to paint them bright colors and to write on the outside, "Bread" (the prisoners were the bread of construction), or "Meat" (it would have been more accurate to write "bones"), or even, simply, "Drink Soviet Champagne!"

Inside, the Black Marias might consist of a simple armored body or shell, an empty enclosure. Or perhaps there were benches against the walls all the way around. This was in no sense a convenience, but the reverse: they would push in just as many prisoners as could be inserted standing up, but in this case they would be piled on top of each other like baggage, one bale on another. The Black Maria might also have a *box* in the rear—a narrow steel closet for one prisoner. Or it might be *boxed* throughout: single closets that locked like cells along the right- and left-hand walls, with a corridor in the middle for the turnkey.

One was hardly likely to imagine that interior like a honeycomb when looking at that laughing maiden on the outside: "Drink Soviet Champagne!"

They drive you into the Black Marias to the tune of the same shouts coming from the convoy from all sides at once: "Come on there, get a move on, quick!" And so that you shouldn't have

time to look around and figure out how to escape, you are shoved and pushed so that you and your bag get stuck in the narrow little door and you knock your head against the lintel. The steel rear door slams shut with a bang—and off you go.

It was rare, of course, to spend hours in a Black Maria; twenty to thirty minutes were more likely. But you got flung around, it was a bone-breaker, it crushed all your insides during those half-hours, your head stooped if you were tall, and you remembered the cozy Stolypin with longing.

And the Black Maria means one thing further—it is a re-shuffling of the deck, new encounters, and among them those which stand out most clearly are, of course, your encounters with the thieves. You may never happen to be in the same compartment with them, and maybe they won't put you in the same cell with them even at the transit prison, but here in the Black Maria you are in their hands.

Sometimes it is so crowded that even the thieves, the urki, find it awkward *to filch*. Your legs and your arms are clamped between your neighbors' bodies and bags as tightly as if they were in stocks. Only when all of you are tossed up and down and all your insides are shaken up by ruts and bumps can you change the position of your legs and arms.

Sometimes, in less crowded circumstances, the thieves can check out the contents of all the bags in just half an hour and appropriate all the "bacilli"—the fats and goodies—and the best of the "trash"—the clothing. Cowardly and sensible considerations most likely restrain you from putting up a fight against them. (And crumb by crumb you are already beginning to lose your immortal soul, still supposing that the main enemies and the main issues lie somewhere ahead and that you must save yourself for them.) And you might just throw a punch at them once and get a knife in the ribs then and there. (There would be no investigation, and even if there should be one, it wouldn't threaten the thieves in any way: they would only *be delayed* at the transit prison instead of going to the far-off camp. You must concede that in a fight between a socially friendly prisoner and a socially hostile prisoner the state simply could not be on the side of the latter.)

In 1946, retired Colonel Lunin, a high-ranking official in

Osoaviakhim—the Society for Assistance to Defense and to Aviation-Chemical Construction of the U.S.S.R.—recounted in a Butyrki cell how the thieves in a Moscow Black Maria, on March 8, International Women's Day, during their transit from the City Court to Taganka Prison, gang-raped a young bride in his presence (and amid the silent passivity of everyone else in the van). That very morning the girl had come to her trial a free person, as attractively dressed as she could manage (she was on trial for leaving her work without official permission—which in itself was a repulsive fabrication worked up by her chief in revenge for her refusal to live with him). A half-hour before the Black Maria, the girl had been sentenced to five years under the decree and had then been shoved into this Black Maria, and right there in broad daylight, somewhere on the Park Ring ("Drink Soviet Champagne!"), had been turned into a camp prostitute. And are we really to say that it was the thieves who did this to her and not the jailers? And not her chief?

And thief tenderness too! Having raped her, they robbed her. They took the fashionable shoes with which she had hoped to charm the judges, and her blouse—which they shoved through to the convoy guards, who stopped the van and went off to get some vodka and handed it in so the thieves could drink at her expense too.

And when they got to the Taganka Prison, the girl sobbed out her complaint. And the officer listened to her, yawned, and said: "The government can't provide each of you with individual transportation. We don't have such facilities."

Yes, the Black Marias are a "bottleneck" of the Archipelago. If there is no possibility of separating the politicals from the criminals in the Stolypins, then it isn't possible to keep women separate from men in the Black Marias. And just how could one expect the thieves not to live it up en route from one jail to another?

Well, and if it weren't for the thieves, we would have to be grateful to the Black Marias for our brief encounters with women! Where, if not here, is one to see them, hear them, and touch them in a prison existence?

Once in 1950 they were transporting us from the Butyrki to the station in a not at all crowded van—fourteen people in a

Black Maria with benches. Everyone sat down, and suddenly they pushed in one more—a woman, alone. She sat down beside the rear door, fearfully at first. After all, she was totally defenseless against fourteen men in a dark cell. But it became clear after a few words that all those present were comrades. Fifty-eights.

She gave us her name—Repina, a colonel's wife, and she had been arrested right after he had. And suddenly a silent military man, so young and thin that it seemed he had to be a lieutenant, said to her: "Tell me, weren't you arrested with Antonina I.?" "What? Are you her husband? Oleg?" "Yes!" "Lieutenant Colonel I.? From the Frunze Academy?" "Yes!"

What a *yes* that was! It emerged from a trembling throat, and in it there was more fear of finding out something bad than there was happiness. He sat down next to her. Twilight shafts of summer daylight, diffused through two microscopic gratings in the two rear doors, flickered around the interior as the van moved along and across the faces of the woman and the lieutenant colonel. "She and I were imprisoned in the same cell for four months while she was undergoing interrogation." "Where is she now?" "All that time she lived only for you! Her fears weren't for herself but were all for you. First that they shouldn't arrest you. And then later that you should get a lighter sentence." "But what has happened to her now?" "She blamed herself for your arrest. Things were so hard for her!" "Where is she now?" "Just don't be frightened"—and Repina put her hands on his chest as if he were her own kin. "She simply couldn't endure the strain. They took her away from us. She, you know, became—well, a little confused. You understand?"

And that tiny storm boxed in sheets of steel rolled along so peacefully in the six-lane automobile traffic, stopped at traffic lights, and signaled for a turn.

I had met Oleg I. in the Butyrki just a few moments before—and here is how it happened. They had herded us into the station "box" and had brought us our things from the storage room. They called him and me to the door at the same moment. Through the opened door into the corridor we could see a woman jailer rifling the contents of his suitcase, and she flung out of it and onto the floor a golden shoulder board with the stars of a lieutenant colonel that had survived until then all by itself, heaven

only knows how; she herself hadn't noticed it, and she had accidentally stepped on its big stars with her foot.

She had trampled it with her shoe—exactly as in a film shot.

I said to him: "Direct your attention to that, Comrade Lieutenant Colonel!"

And he glowered. After all, he still had his ideas about the spotlessness of the service.

And now here was the next thing—about his wife.

And he had had only one hour to fit all this in.

Chapter 2

■

The Ports of the Archipelago

Spread out on a large table the enormous map of our Motherland. Indicate with fat black dots all provincial capitals, all railroad junctions, all transfer points where the railroad line ends in a river route, and where rivers bend and trails begin. What is this? Has the entire map been speckled by infectious flies? What it is, in fact, is precisely the majestic map of the ports of the Archipelago. These are not, to be sure, the enchanted ports to which Aleksandr Grin enticed us, where rum is drunk in taverns and men pay court to beautiful women.

It is a rare zek who has not known from three to five transit prisons and camps; many remember a dozen or so, and *the sons of Gulag* can count up to fifty of them without the slightest difficulty. However, in memory they get all mixed up together because they are so similar: in the illiteracy of their convoys, in their inept roll calls based on *case files;* the long waiting under the beating sun or autumn drizzle; the still longer *body searches* that involve undressing completely; their haircuts with unsanitary clippers; their cold, slippery baths; their foul-smelling toilets; their damp and moldy corridors; their perpetually crowded, nearly always dark, wet cells; the warmth of human flesh flanking you on the floor or on the board bunks; the bumpy ridges of bunk heads knocked together from boards; the wet, almost liquid, bread; the gruel cooked from what seems to be silage.

And whoever has a good sharp memory and can recollect

precisely what distinguishes one from another has no need to travel about the country because he knows its geography full well on the basis of transit prisons. Novosibirsk? I know it. I was there. Very strong barracks there, made from thick beams. Irkutsk? That was where the windows had been bricked over in several stages, you could see how they had been in Tsarist times, and each course had been laid separately, and only small slits had been left between them. Vologda? Yes, an ancient building with towers. The toilets right on top of one another, the wooden partitions rotten, and the ones above leaking down into the ones underneath. Usman? Of course. A lice-ridden stinking hole of a jail, an ancient vaulted structure. And they used to pack it so full that whenever they took prisoners out for a transport you couldn't imagine where they'd put them all—a line strung out halfway through the city.

You had better not tell such a connoisseur that you know some city without a transit prison. He will prove to you conclusively that there are no such cities, and he will be right. Salsk? Well, there they keep transit prisoners in the KPZ—cells for preliminary detention—along with prisoners under interrogation. And what do you mean, no transit prison in every district center too? In Sol-Iletsk? Of course there's one. In Rybinsk? What about Prison No. 2, a former monastery? It's a quiet one, too, with empty courtyards paved with old, mossy flagstones and clean wooden tubs in the bath. In Chita? Prison No. 1. In Naushki? Not a prison but a transit camp, which is the same thing. In Torzhok? Up the hill, also in a monastery.

You must realize, dear sir, that every town has to have its own transit prison. After all, the courts operate everywhere. And how are prisoners to be delivered to camp? By air?

Of course, no transit prison is the equal of another. But which is better and which worse is something that can't be settled in an argument. If three or four zeks get together, each of them feels bound *to praise* his "own." Let us listen for a while to such a discussion:

"Well, even if the Ivanovo Transit Prison isn't one of the more famous, my friends, just ask anybody imprisoned there in the winter of 1937–1938. The prison was *unheated*—and the prisoners not only didn't freeze to death, but on the upper bunks they

lay there undressed. And they knocked out all the windowpanes so as not to suffocate. Instead of the twenty men Cell 21 was supposed to contain, there were *three hundred and twenty-three!* There was water underneath the bunks, and boards were laid in the water and people lay on those boards. That was right where the frost poured in from the broken windows. It was like Arctic night down under the bunks. There was no light down there either because it was cut off by the people lying on the bunks above and standing in the aisle. It was impossible to walk through the aisle to the latrine tank, and people crawled along the edges of the bunks. They didn't distribute rations to individuals but to units of ten. If one of the ten died, the others shoved his corpse under the bunks and kept it there until it started to stink. They got the corpse's ration. And all that could have been endured, but the turnkeys seemed to have been oiled with turpentine—and they kept driving the prisoners endlessly from cell to cell, on and on. You'd just get yourself settled when 'Come on, get a move on! You're being moved!' And you'd have to start in again trying to find a place! And the reason for such overcrowding was that they hadn't taken anyone to the bath for three months, the lice had multiplied, and people had abscesses from the lice on their feet and legs—and typhus too. And because of the typhus the prison was quarantined and no prisoner transports could leave it for four months."

"Well, fellows, the problem there wasn't Ivanovo, but the year. In 1937–1938, of course, not just the zeks but the very stones of the transit prisons were screaming in agony. Irkutsk was no special transit prison either, but in 1938 the doctors didn't even dare look into the cells but would walk down the corridor while the turnkey shouted through the door: *'Anyone unconscious, come out.'* "

"In 1937, fellows, it was that way all across Siberia to the Kolyma, and the big bottleneck was in the Sea of Okhotsk, and in Vladivostok. The steamships could transport only thirty thousand a month, and they kept driving them on and on from Moscow without taking that into account. Well, and so a hundred thousand of them piled up. Understand?"

"Who counted them?"

"Whoever was supposed to, counted."

"If you're talking about the Vladivostok Transit Prison, then in February, 1937, there weren't more than forty thousand there."

"People were stuck there for several months at a time. The bedbugs infested the board bunks like locusts. Half a mug of water a day; there wasn't any more!—no one to haul it. There was one whole compound of Koreans, and they all died from dysentery, every last one of them. They took a hundred corpses out of our own compound every morning. They were building a morgue, so they hitched the zeks to the carts and hauled the stone that way. Today you do the hauling, and tomorrow they haul you there yourself. And in autumn the typhus arrived. And we did the same thing: we didn't hand over the corpses till they stank—and took the extra rations. No medication whatever. We crawled to the fence and begged: 'Give us medicine.' And the guards fired a volley from the watchtowers. Then they assembled those with typhus in a separate barracks. Some didn't make it there, and only a few came back. The bunks there had two stories. And anyone on an upper who was sick and running a fever wasn't able to clamber down to go to the toilet—and so it would all pour down on the people underneath. There were fifteen hundred sick there. And all the orderlies were thieves. They'd pull out the gold teeth from the corpses. And not only from the corpses."

"Why do you keep going on and on about 1937? What about 1949 on Vanino Bay, in the fifth compound? What about that? There were 35,000! And for several months too! There was another bottleneck in transport to the Kolyma. And every night for some reason they kept driving people from one barracks to another and from one compound to another. Just as it was with the Fascists: Whistles! Screams! 'Come on out there *without the last one!*'[1] And everyone went on the run! Always on the run! They'd drive a hundred to get bread—on the run! For gruel—on the run! No bowls to eat from. Take the gruel in whatever you could—the flap of your coat, your hands! They brought water in big tanks and there was nothing to distribute it in, so they shot it out in sprays. And whoever could get his mouth in front of one

1. "Without the last one!"—a menacing command to be understood literally. It meant: "I will kill the last man" (literally or at least warm his hide with a club). And so all piled out so as not to be last.

got some. Prisoners began to fight in front of the tanks—and the guards fired on them from the towers. Exactly like under the Fascists! Major General Derevyanko, the Chief of Administration of the Northeast [i.e., Kolyma] Corrective Labor Camps, came, and while he was there an air force aviator stepped out in front of the crowd and ripped his field shirt down the front: 'I have seven battle decorations! Who gave you the right to shoot into the compound?' And Derevyanko replied: 'We shot and *we will go on shooting* until you learn how to behave.' "[2]

"No, boys, none of those are real transit prisons. Now take Kirov! That was a real one! Let's not take any special year, but, say, 1947. Even then in Kirov two turnkeys had to work together with their boots to jam people into a cell, that being the only way they could get the door shut. In September (and Kirov—formerly Vyatka—isn't on the Black Sea either) everyone was sitting naked on the three-story bunks because of the heat. They were *sitting* because there was no place to lie down: one row sat at the heads of the bunks and one row at the feet. And two rows sat on the floor in the aisle, and others stood between them, and they took turns. They kept their knapsacks in their hands or on their knees because there was nowhere to put them down. Only the thieves were in their *lawful* places, the second-story bunks next to the windows, and they spread out as they pleased. There were so many bedbugs that they went right on biting in the daytime, and they dive-bombed straight from the ceiling. And people had to suffer through that for a week or even a month."

I myself would like to interrupt in order to tell about Krasnaya Presnya[3] in August, 1945, in the Victory summer, but I am shy: after all, in Krasnaya Presnya we could somehow stretch out our legs at night, and the bedbugs were moderate, and flies bit us all night long as we lay naked and sweaty under the bright lights, but of course that's nothing at all, and I would be ashamed to boast about it. We streamed with sweat every time we moved,

2. Say there, Bertrand Russell's "War Crimes Tribunal"! Why don't you use this bit of material? Or doesn't it suit you?

3. This transit prison with its glorious revolutionary name is little known to Muscovites. There are no excursions to it, and how could there be when it is still *in operation?* But to get a close look at it, you don't have to travel any distance at all. It's a mere stone's throw from the Novokhoroshevo Highway on the circle line.

and it simply poured out of us after we ate. There were a hundred of us in a cell a little larger than the average room in an apartment, and we were packed in, and you couldn't find a place on the floor for your feet. And two little windows on the south side were blocked with "muzzles" made of steel sheets. They not only kept the air from circulating, but they got very hot from the sun and radiated heat into the cell.

Just as all transit prisons are pointless, talk about transit prisons is pointless, and, in all probability, this chapter, too, will turn out to be the same: one doesn't know what to take hold of first, what particular thing to talk about, what to lead off with. And the more people that are crowded into transit prisons, the more pointless it all becomes. It is unbearable for a human being, and it is inexpedient for Gulag—but people sit there month after month. And the transit prison becomes a straight factory: bread rations are lugged in, stacked up in hand barrows like those in which bricks are hauled. And the steaming gruel is brought in six-bucket wooden casks that have holes knocked in them with a crowbar.

The transit prison at Kotlas was tenser and more aboveboard than many. Tenser because it opened the way to the whole Northeast of European Russia, and more aboveboard because it was already deep in the Archipelago, and there was no need to pretend to anybody. It was simply a piece of land divided into cages by fencing and the cages were all kept locked. Although it had been thickly settled by peasants when they were exiled in 1930 (one must realize that they had no roofs over their heads, but nobody is left to tell about it), even in 1938 there simply wasn't room for everyone in the frail one-story wooden barracks made of discarded end-pieces of lumber and covered with . . . tarpaulin. Under the wet autumn snow and in freezing temperatures people simply lived there on the ground, beneath the heavens. True, they weren't allowed to grow numb from inactivity. They were being counted endlessly; they were invigorated by check-ups (twenty thousand people were there at a time) or by sudden night searches. Later on tents were pitched in these cages, and log houses two stories high were built in some of them, but to reduce the construction costs sensibly, no floor was laid between the stories—six-story bunks with stepladders

were simply built into the sides, up and down which prisoners on their last legs, on the verge of dying, had to clamber like sailors (a structure which would have adorned a ship more appropriately than a port). In the winter of 1944–1945, when everyone had a roof over his head, there was room for only 7,500 prisoners, and fifty of them died every day, and the stretchers on which they were carried to the morgue were never idle. (People will object that this was quite acceptable—a death rate of less than one percent per day—and that, given that sort of turnover, a person might manage to last five months. Yes, but the main killer was camp labor, and that hadn't even begun yet for transit prisoners. This loss of two-thirds of one percent per day represents sheer *shrinkage,* and it would be intolerably high even in some vegetable warehouses.)

The deeper into the Archipelago one got, the more obviously did the concrete docks of the Archipelago become transformed into wharves made of wooden pilings.

In the course of several years, half a million people passed through *Karabas,* the transit camp near Karaganda, whose name became a byword in the language. (Yuri Karbe was there in 1942 and was already registered in the 433rd thousand.) The transit prison consisted of low rammed-earth barracks with earthen floors. Daily recreation there consisted in driving all the prisoners out with their things and putting artists to work whitewashing the floor and even painting carpets on it, and then in the evening the zeks would lie down on it, and their bodies would rub out both the whitewash and the carpets.[4]

The Knyazh-Pogost transit point (latitude 63 degrees north) consisted of shacks built on a swamp. Their pole frames were covered with torn tarpaulin tenting that didn't quite reach the ground. The double bunks inside them were also made of poles (from which, incidentally, the branches had been only partially removed), and the aisle was floored with poles also. During the day, the wet mud squelched through the flooring, and at night it froze. In various parts of the area, the walkways were laid on frail and shaky poles and here and there people whom weakness

4. Of all the transit prisons Karabas was worthiest of becoming a museum. But, alas, it no longer exists: in its place there is a factory for reinforced-concrete products.

had made clumsy fell into the water and ooze. In 1938 they fed the prisoners in Knyazh-Pogost the same thing every day: a mash made of crushed grits and fish bones. This was convenient because there were no bowls, spoons, or forks at the transit prison and the prisoners had none of their own either. They were herded to the boiler by the dozens and the mash was ladled into their caps or the flaps of their jackets.

And in the transit prison of Vogvozdino (several miles from Ust-Vym), where five thousand prisoners were kept at a time (now who ever heard of Vogvozdino before this sentence? how many such unknown transit prisons were there? and then multiply that by 5,000), the food was liquid, but they had no bowls either. However, they managed without them (what is there that our Russian ingenuity cannot overcome?) by distributing the gruel in *washbasins* for ten people at a time, leaving them to race each other gulping it down.[5]

True, no one was imprisoned in Vogvozdino longer than a year. (The kind of prisoner who would have been imprisoned there that long was a prisoner on his last legs whom all the camps had refused to accept.)

The imagination of writers is poverty-stricken in regard to the native life and customs of the Archipelago. When they want to write about the most reprehensible and disgraceful aspect of prison, they always accuse the *latrine bucket.* In literature the latrine bucket has become the symbol of prison, a symbol of humiliation, of stink. Oh, how frivolous can you be? Now was the latrine bucket really an evil for the prisoner? On the contrary, it was the most merciful device of the prison administration. The actual horror began the moment there was *no* latrine bucket in the cell.

In 1937 *there were no latrine buckets* in certain Siberian prisons, or there weren't enough. Not enough of them had been made ahead of time—Siberian industry hadn't caught up with the full scope of arrests. There were no latrine barrels in the warehouses for the newly created cells. There were old latrine buckets in the

5. Galina Serebryakova! Boris Dyakov! Aldan-Semyonov! Did you ever gulp from a washbasin, ten at a time? And if you had, you would never, of course, have descended to the "animal needs" of Ivan Denisovich, would you? And in the midst of the mob scene at the washbasin you would have continued to think only about your dear Party?

cells, but they were antiquated and small, and the only reasonable thing to do at that point was to remove them, since they amounted to nothing at all for the new reinforcements of prisoners. So if long ago the Minusinsk Prison had been built for five hundred people (Vladimir Ilyich Lenin was never inside it; he moved about freely), and there were now ten thousand in it, it meant that each latrine bucket ought to have become twenty times bigger. But it had not.

Our Russian pens write only in large letters. We have lived through so very much, and almost none of it has been described and called by its right name. But, for Western authors, peering through a microscope at the living cells of everyday life, shaking a test tube in the beam of a strong light, this is after all a whole epic, another ten volumes of *Remembrance of Things Past:* to describe the perturbation of a human soul placed in a cell filled to twenty times its capacity and with no latrine bucket, where prisoners are taken out to the toilet only once a day! Of course, much of the texture of this life is bound to be quite unknown to Western writers; they wouldn't realize that in this situation one solution was to urinate in your canvas hood, nor would they at all understand one prisoner's advice to another to urinate in his boot! And yet that advice was the fruit of wisdom derived from vast experience, and it didn't involve spoiling the boot and it didn't reduce the boot to the status of a pail. It meant that the boot had to be taken off, turned upside down, the boot tops turned inside out and up—and thus a cylindrical vessel was formed that constituted the much-needed container. But, at the same time, with what psychological twists and turns Western writers could enrich their literature (without in the least risking any banal repetition of the famous masters) if they only knew about the scheme of things in that same Minusinsk Prison: there was only one food bowl for every four prisoners; and one mug of drinking water per day was issued to each (there were enough mugs to go around). And it could happen that one of the four contrived to use the bowl allotted to him and three others to relieve his internal pressure and then refuse to hand over his daily water ration to wash it out before lunch. What a conflict! What a clash of four personalities! What nuances! (And I am not joking. That is when the rock bottom of a human being is revealed. It is only that

Russian pens are too busy to write about it, and Russian eyes don't have time to read about it. I am not joking—because only doctors can tell us how months in such a cell will ruin a human being's health for his entire life, even if he wasn't shot under Yezhov and was rehabilitated under Khrushchev.)

And just to think that we had dreamed of resting and loosening up a bit in port! After being squashed and doubled up for several days in the Stolypin, how we had dreamed of the transit prison! That we could stretch out a bit there and straighten up. That we would be able to go to the toilet there without hurrying! That we would drink as much water there as we wanted, and get as much hot water for tea. That there we wouldn't be forced to ransom our own bread rations from the convoy with our own belongings. That we would be fed hot food there. And that at last we would be taken to the bath, that we could drench ourselves in hot water and stop itching. We had had elbows stuck into our sides and been tossed from side to side in the Black Maria; and they had shouted at us: "Link arms!" "Take hold of your heels!" But we were in good spirits anyway: it was all right, all right, soon we would be at the transit prison! And now we were there.

And even if some part of our dreams came true in the transit prison, something else would foul it all up anyway.

What awaits us in the bath? You can never be sure. They begin suddenly to shave all the women's hair off. (In Krasnaya Presnya, in November, 1950.) Or a line of us naked men is clipped by women barbers only. In the Vologda steam room, portly Aunt Motya used to shout: "Stand up, men!" And she'd let the whole line have it from the steam pipe. And the Irkutsk Transit Prison argued differently: it's more natural for the entire service staff in the bath to be male and for a man to smear on the medicinal tar ointment between the women's legs. Or during the winter, in the cold soaping-up room of the Novosibirsk Transit Prison only cold water comes from the faucets; the prisoners make up their minds to ask higher-ups, and a captain comes, puts his own hand unfastidiously under a faucet: "I say this water is hot, get it?" I have already wearied of reporting that there are baths which have no water at all, that they scorch clothes in the roaster, that

after the bath they compel people to run naked and barefoot through the snow to get their things (the counterintelligence of the Second Byelorussian Front in Brodnica in 1945).

From your very first steps in the transit prison you realize that here you are not in the hands of the jailers or the officers of the prison administration, who at least adhere some of the time to some kind of written law. Here you are in the hands of *the trusties.* That surly bath attendant who comes to meet your prisoner transport: "Well, go wash, gentlemen Fascists!" And that work-assignment clerk with a plywood writing board who looks over your formation searchingly and hurries you up. And that *instructor,* clean-shaven except for a prominent forelock, who slaps his leg with that rolled-up newspaper and at the same time gives your bags a once-over. And then other transit-prison trusties, whom you don't recognize, penetrate your suitcases with X-ray eyes—oh, how alike they all are! And where in your brief prisoner-transport journey have you seen them all before? Not so clean-looking, not so well washed, but the same kind of ugly-mug swine with pitiless, bare-toothed grins?

Baaaah! These are the same blatnye, the thieves, again. Those same urki crooks, whom Leonid Utyosov glorifies in his songs. Here again are Zhenka Zhogol, Seryoga-Zver, and Dimka Kishkenya, but not behind bars this time; they have been cleaned up, dressed up as representatives of the state. And *putting on airs* of great importance, they see to it that discipline is observed—by us. And if one peers into those snouts, one can even, with imagination, picture that they sprang from the same Russian roots as the rest of us—that once upon a time they were village boys whose fathers bore such names as Klim, Prokhor, Guri, and that their general structure is even similar to our own: two nostrils, two irises in the eyes, a rosy tongue with which to swallow food and utter certain Russian sounds, which, however, shape totally new words.

Every chief of a transit prison has enough presence of mind to realize that he can send his relatives back home the wages for all staff positions or else he can divvy them up with the other prison officers. And all you have to do is whistle to get as many volunteers as you want from among the *socially friendly* prison elements to carry out all that work just in return for being allowed to

cast anchor at the transit prison and not have to go on to a mine or to the taiga. All these work-assignment clerks, office clerks, bookkeepers, instructors, bath attendants, barbers, stockroom clerks, cooks, dishwashers, laundresses, tailors who repair underwear and linens—are permanent transit-prison residents. They receive prison rations and are registered in cells, and they swipe the rest of their soup and chow on their own out of the common food pot or out of the *bundles* of the transit zeks. All these transit-prison trusties regard it as certain that they will never be better off in any camp. We arrive in their hands still not completely plucked, and they bamboozle us to their hearts' content. It is they and not the jailers who search us and our belongings here, and before the search they suggest we turn in our money for safekeeping, and they seriously write down a list—we never see the list or the money again. "We turned in our money." "Who to?" the officer who has arrived on the scene asks in surprise. "Well, it was one of them." "Who exactly?" The trusties hadn't noticed which one. "Why did you turn it over to him?" "We thought . . ." "That's what the turkey thought! Think less and you'll be better off." And that's that. They suggest we leave our things in the vestibule to the bath: "No one's going to take them. Who needs them?" We leave them, for after all we can't take them into the bath with us anyway. We return and there are no sweaters left and no fur-lined mittens. "What kind of a sweater was it?" "Grayish." "Well, that means it went to the laundry." They also take things from us *honestly:* in return for taking a suitcase into the storage room for safekeeping; for putting us in a cell without the thieves; for sending us off on prisoner transports as soon as possible; for not sending us off as long as possible. The only thing they don't do is rob us by main force out in the open.

"But those aren't thieves!" the connoisseurs among us explain. "These are the *bitches*—the ones who work for the prison. They are enemies of the *honest thieves.* And the honest thieves are the ones imprisoned in cells." But somehow this is hard for our rabbity brains to grasp. Their ways are the same; they have the same kind of tattoos. Maybe they really are enemies of *those others,* but after all they are not our friends either, that's how it is. . . .

And by this time they have forced us to sit down in the yard right underneath the cell windows. The windows all have "muz-

zles" on them and you can't look in, but from inside, hoarse, friendly voices advise: "Hey, fellows! You know what they do here? When they search you, they take away everything loose like tea and tobacco. If you have any, toss it in here, through our window. We'll give it back later." So what do you know? We are suckers and rabbits. Maybe they do take tea and tobacco away. We have read about universal prisoner solidarity in all our great literature, that one prisoner won't deceive another. The way they spoke to us was friendly. "Hey, fellows!" And so we *toss* them our tobacco pouches. And the genuine pure-bred thieves on the other side catch them and guffaw: "You Fascist stupes."

And here are the slogans with which the whole transit prison welcomes us even though they don't actually hang them on the walls: "Don't look for justice here!" "You're going to have to hand over everything you've got to us." "You'll have to give it all up." This is repeated to you by the jailers, the convoy, and the thieves. You are overwhelmed by your unbearable prison term, and you are trying to figure out how to catch your breath, while everyone around you is figuring out how to plunder you. Everything works out so as to oppress the political prisoner, who is already depressed and abandoned without all that. "You will have to give it all up." The jailer at the Gorky Transit Prison shakes his head hopelessly; and with a sense of relief, Ans Bernshtein gives him his officer's greatcoat—not free, but in exchange for two onions. And why should you complain about the thieves if you see all the jailers at Krasnaya Presnya wearing chrome-leather boots they were never issued? They were all *lifted* by the thieves in the cells and then *pushed* to the jailers. Why complain about the thieves if the *instructor of the Cultural and Educational Department* of the camp administration is a blatnoi, a thief, himself and writes *reports* on the politicals? (The Kem Transit Prison.) And how are you ever going to get justice against the thieves in the Rostov Transit Prison when this is their ancient native tribal den?

They say that in 1942 at the Gorky Transit Prison some officer prisoners (including Gavrilov, the military engineer Shchebetin, and others) nonetheless rebelled, beat up the thieves, and forced them to stay in line. But this is always regarded as a legend; did the thieves capitulate in just one of the cells? For long? And

how was it that the bluecaps allowed the socially *hostile* elements to beat up the socially *friendly* ones? And when they say that at the Kotlas Transit Prison in 1940 the thieves started to grab money right out of the hands of the politicals lined up at the commissary, and the politicals began to beat them up so badly that they couldn't be stopped, and the perimeter guards entered the compound with machine guns to defend the thieves—now there's something that rings true. That's the way it really was.

Foolish relatives! They dash about in freedom, borrow money (because they never have that kind of money at home), and send you foodstuffs and things—the widow's last mite, but also a poisoned gift, because it transforms you from a free though hungry person into one who is anxious and cowardly, and it deprives you of that newly dawning enlightenment, that toughening resolve, which are all you need for your descent into the abyss. Oh, wise Gospel saying about the camel and the eye of the needle! These material things will keep you from entering the heavenly kingdom of the liberated spirit. And you see that others in the police van have the same kind of bags as you. "Ragbag bastards!" the thieves have already snarled at you in the Black Maria—but there were only two of them and there were fifty of you and so far they haven't touched you. And now they were holding us for the second day at the Krasnaya Presnya *station* with our legs tucked beneath us on the dirty floor because we were so crowded. However, none of us was observing the life going on around us, because we were all too concerned with how to turn in our suitcases for safekeeping. Even though we were supposed to have the right to turn in our things for safekeeping, nonetheless the only reason the work-assignment clerks permitted us to do it was because the prison was a Moscow prison and we ourselves hadn't yet lost our Moscow look.

What a relief—our things had been checked. (And that meant we would have to *give them up* not at this transit prison but later on.) The only things left dangling from our hands were our bundles with our ill-fated foodstuffs. Too many of us *beavers* had been assembled in one place. They began to distribute us among different cells. I was shoved into a cell with that same Valentin whom I had been with the day I signed for my OSO sentence, and who had proposed with touching sentiment that we

begin a new life in camp. It was not yet packed full. The aisle was free. There was plenty of space under the bunks. According to the traditional arrangement, the thieves occupied the second tier of bunks: their senior members were beside the windows, their juniors farther back. A neutral gray mass was on the lower bunks. No one attacked us. Without looking around and without thinking ahead, inexperienced as we were, we sat down on the asphalt floor and crawled under the bunks. We would even be cozy there. The bunks were low for big men to get under, and we had to slide in on our bellies, inching along the asphalt floor. We did. And we were going to lie there quietly and talk quietly. Not a chance! In the semidarkness, with a wordless rustling, from all sides *juveniles* crept up on us on all fours, like big rats. They were still boys, some twelve-year-olds even, but the Criminal Code accepted them too. They had already been *processed* through a thieves' trial, and they were continuing their apprenticeship with the thieves here. They had been unleashed on us. They jumped us from all sides and six pairs of hands stripped from us and wrenched from under us all our wealth. And all this took place in total silence, with only the sound of sinister sniffing. And we were trapped: we couldn't get up, we couldn't move. It took no more than a minute for them to seize the bundles with the fat bacon, sugar, and bread. They were gone. We lay there feeling stupid. We had given up our food without a fight. And we could go on lying there now, but that was utterly impossible. Creeping out awkwardly, rear ends first, we got up from under the bunks.

Am I a coward? I had thought I wasn't one. I had pushed my way into the heat of a bombing in the open steppe, I hadn't been afraid to drive over a trail obviously mined with antitank mines. I had remained coolheaded when I led my battery out of encirclement and went back in for a damaged command car. Why, then, at that moment didn't I grab one of those human rats and grate his rosy face on the black asphalt? Was he too small? Well then, go for their leaders. But no. At the front we are strengthened by some kind of supplementary awareness (and quite false, too, perhaps): is it a sense of our military unity? The sense of being in the right place at the right time? Of duty? But in this new situation nothing is clear, there are no rules, and everything has to be learned by feel.

Getting to my feet, I turned to their senior, the pakhan, the ringleader of the thieves. All the stolen victuals were there in front of him beside the window on the second tier of bunks: the juvenile rats hadn't eaten a thing themselves. They were disciplined. Nature had sculpted the front part of the ringleader's head, in bipeds usually called a face, with nausea and hate. Or perhaps it had come to be what it was from living the life of a beast of prey. It sagged crookedly and loosely, with a low forehead, a savage scar, and modern steel crowns on the front teeth. His little eyes were exactly large enough to see all familiar objects and yet not take delight in the beauties of the world. He looked at me as a boar looks at a deer, knowing he could always knock me off my feet.

He was waiting. And what did I do? Leap forward to smash my fist in that ugly mug at least once and then go down in the aisle? Alas, I did not.

Am I a scoundrel? Until that moment I had always thought that I wasn't. But now, plundered and humiliated, I found it offensive to get down flat on my stomach again and crawl back beneath the bunks. And so I addressed the ringleader of the thieves indignantly and told him that since he had taken our food away from us he might at least give us a place on the bunks. (Now just tell me, wasn't that a natural complaint for a city dweller and an officer?)

And what happened then? The ringleader of the thieves agreed. After all, I was thereby surrendering any claim to the fat bacon; and I was thereby recognizing his superior authority; and I was revealing a point of view in common with his—he, too, would have driven off the weakest. And he gave orders for two of the gray neutrals to get off the lower bunks beside the window and free a space for us. They obeyed submissively. And we lay down in the best places. For a while we still grieved over our loss. (The thieves paid no attention to my military breeches. They weren't their kind of uniform. But one of the thieves was already fingering Valentin's woolen trousers. He liked them.) And it was only at night that the reproachful whisper of our neighbors reached us: how could we ask the thieves to help us by driving two *of our own people* under the bunks in our place? And only then did awareness of my own meanness prick my conscience and make me blush. (And for many years thereafter I blushed every time I

remembered it.) The gray prisoners on the lower bunks were my own brothers, 58-1b, the POW's. Had I not just a short while ago sworn to assume the burden of their fate? And then I had shunted them off under the bunks. True, they hadn't done anything to defend us against the thieves. But why should they have fought for our fat bacon if we ourselves didn't? They had had enough cruel fights back in POW camps to destroy their faith in decency. But they hadn't done me any harm, and I had them.

And thus it is that we have to keep getting banged on flank and snout again and again so as to become, in time at least, human beings, yes, human beings. . . .

■

But even for the newcomer whom the transit prison cracks open and shucks, it is very, very necessary. It gives him some gradual preparation for camp life. Such a change all in one step would be more than the heart could bear. His consciousness would be unable to orient itself in that murk all at once. It has to happen gradually.

Then, too, the transit prison gave the prisoner the semblance of communicating with home. It was there he wrote the first letter he was permitted to: reporting that he hadn't been shot and, sometimes, the direction of his prisoner transport, and these were always the first unfamiliar words home of a man who had been plowed over by interrogation. At home they continued to remember him as he had been, but he would never be that person again. And that could suddenly, like a stroke of lightning, become apparent in one or another clumsily written line. Clumsily written because, even though letters could be sent from transit prisons, and there was a mailbox in the yard, it was impossible to get either paper or pencils—or anything to sharpen a pencil with. However, a makhorka wrapper or one from a sugar packet could turn up and be smoothed out, and someone in the cell would have a pencil—and so lines would be written in an undecipherable scrawl which would determine the family's future peace or discord.

Women driven out of their minds by receiving such a letter would sometimes precipitately rush off and try to get to their

husbands at the transit prison—even though visits were never allowed and they would have succeeded only in burdening him with things. One such woman provided, in my opinion, the theme for a monument to all wives—and even indicated the place for it.

This was in the Kuibyshev Transit Prison in 1950. The prison was situated in a low-lying area (from which, however, the Zhiguli Gates of the Volga River could be seen). And right above the prison, bordering it on the east, rose a high, long, grassy hill. It was outside the camp compound and above it; and from the inside and down below we couldn't see the approach to it. Very rarely did anyone ever appear up there, although sometimes goats were pastured there or children played. And one cloudy summer day a city woman appeared on its ridge. Shading her eyes with her hand and barely moving, she began to scan our compound from above. At the time, three heavily populated cells were taking their outdoor walk in three separate exercise yards—and there in the abyss among those three hundred depersonalized ants she hoped to catch sight of her man! Did she hope that her heart would tell her which one he was? In all probability they had refused to allow her a visit with him and so she had climbed that hill. Everyone noticed her from the courtyards and everyone stared at her. Down below in the hollow there was no wind, but it was blowing hard up above. It made her long dress, her jacket, and her long hair stream out and billow, expressing all that love and anxiety which possessed her.

I think that a statue of such a woman, right there on that spot, on the hill overlooking the transit prison, with her face to the Zhiguli Gates, just as she actually stood, might explain at least a little something to our grandchildren.[6]

6. After all, someday the hidden and all but lost story of our Archipelago will be portrayed in monuments too! And I visualize, for example, one more such project: somewhere on a high point in the Kolyma, a most enormous Stalin, just such a size as he himself dreamed of, with mustaches many feet long and the bared fangs of a camp *commandant*, one hand holding the reins and the other wielding a knout with which to beat his team of hundreds of people harnessed in fives and all pulling hard. This would also be a fine sight on the edge of the Chukchi Peninsula next to the Bering Strait. (I had written this before I read "The Bas-Relief on the Cliff." And that means there is something to the idea. They say that on Mogutova Hill at the Zhiguli Gates on the Volga, a mile from the camp, there used to be an enormous oil portrait of Stalin which had been painted on the cliff for the benefit of passing steamers.)

She was there for a long time and they didn't drive her off, probably because the guards were too lazy to climb the hill. But finally a soldier climbed up and began to shout and wave his hands at her—and chased her away.

The transit prison also gives the prisoner some kind of over-all view, some breadth of outlook. As they say: even though there's nothing to eat, still it's a gay life. In the incessant traffic here, in the comings and goings of dozens and hundreds of people, in the frankness of the stories and conversations (in camp they don't talk so freely because they are always afraid there of stepping into the trap of the *Oper,* the Security officer), you are refreshed, you are aired out, you become more lucid, and you begin to understand better what is happening to you, to your people, even to the world. Even one single eccentric who turns up in your cell can tell you things you'll never in your life read about.

All of a sudden they introduce into the cell some kind of miracle: a tall young military man with a Roman profile, curly and unclipped flaxen locks, in a British uniform—just as if he had come straight from the Normandy landing, an officer of the invading army. He enters as proudly as if he expected everyone to rise to their feet in his presence. And it turns out that he had simply not expected to be among friends at this point: he had already been imprisoned for two years, but he had never yet been in a cell and he had been brought secretly, right to the transit prison itself, in an individual Stolypin compartment. And then, unexpectedly, either by mistake or else with special intent, he had been admitted to our common stable. He looked around the cell, saw a Wehrmacht officer there in German uniform, and started to argue with him in German; and there they were arguing heatedly, ready, it seemed, to resort to weapons if they'd had any. Five years had passed since the war, and it had been drummed into us that in the West the war had been waged only for the sake of appearances, and to us it was strange to observe their mutual outrage: the German had been with us for a long time, and we Russians hadn't argued with him; for the most part we had laughed with him.

No one would have believed the story of Erik Arvid Andersen had it not been for his unshorn locks—a miracle unique in all

Gulag. And that foreign bearing of his. And his fluent English, German, and Swedish speech. According to him he was the son of a rich Swede—not merely a millionaire but a billionaire. (Well, let's assume he embellished a little.) On his mother's side he was a nephew of the British General Robertson, who commanded the British Zone in occupied Germany. A Swedish subject, he had served as a volunteer in the British Army and had actually landed in Normandy, and after the war he had become a Swedish career officer. However, the investigation of social systems remained one of his principal interests. His thirst for socialism was stronger than his attachment to his father's capital. He looked upon Soviet socialism with feelings of profound sympathy, and he had even had the chance to become convinced of its flourishing state with his own eyes when he had come to Moscow as a member of a Swedish military delegation. They had been given banquets and taken to country homes and there they had encountered no obstacles at all to establishing contact with ordinary Soviet citizens—with pretty actresses who for some reason never had to rush off to work and who willingly spent time with them, even tête-à-tête. And thus convinced once and for all of the triumph of our social system, Erik on his return to the West wrote articles in the press defending and praising Soviet socialism. And this proved to be his undoing. In those very years, in 1947 and 1948, they were roping in from all sorts of nooks and crannies progressive young Westerners prepared to renounce the West publicly (and it appeared that if they could only have collected another dozen or so the West would shudder and collapse). Erik's newspaper articles caused him to be regarded as suitable for this category. At the time he was serving in West Berlin, and he had left his wife in Sweden. And out of pardonable male weakness he used to visit an unmarried German girl in East Berlin. And it was there that he was bound and gagged one night (and is not this the significance of the proverb which says: "He went to see his cousin, and he ended up in prison"? This had probably been going on for a long time, and he wasn't the first). They took him to Moscow, where Gromyko, who had once dined at his father's home in Stockholm and who knew the son also, not only returned the hospitality but proposed to the young man that he renounce publicly both capitalism and his own father. And in return he was

promised full and complete capitalist maintenance to the end of his days here in our country. But to Gromyko's surprise, although Erik would not have suffered any material loss, he became indignant and uttered some very insulting words. Since they didn't believe in his strength of mind, they locked him up in a dacha outside Moscow, fed him like a prince in a fairy tale (sometimes they used "awful methods of repression" on him: they refused to accept his orders for the following day's menu and instead of the spring chicken he ordered they simply brought him a steak, just like that), surrounded him with the works of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin, and waited a year for him to be re-educated. To their surprise it didn't happen. At that point they quartered with him a former lieutenant general who had already served two years in Norilsk. They probably calculated that by relating the horrors of camp the lieutenant general would persuade Erik to surrender. But either he carried out that assignment badly or else he didn't want to carry it out. After ten months of their being imprisoned together, the only thing he had taught Erik was broken Russian, and he had bolstered Erik's growing repugnance for the bluecaps. In the summer of 1950 they once more summoned Erik to Vyshinsky and he once more refused (in so doing, he made existence contingent on consciousness, thereby violating all the Marxist-Leninist rules!). And then Abakumov himself read Erik the decree: twenty years in prison (what for???). They themselves already regretted having gotten mixed up with this ignoramus, but at the same time they couldn't release him and let him go back to the West. And so they transported him in a separate compartment, and it was there that he had heard the story of the Moscow girl through the partition and seen through the train window in the dawn light the rotting straw-thatched roofs of the age-old Russia of Ryazan.

Those two years had very strongly confirmed him in his loyalty to the West. He believed blindly in the West. He did not want to recognize its weaknesses. He considered Western armies unbeatable and Western political leaders faultless. He refused to believe us when we told him that during the period of his imprisonment Stalin had begun a blockade of Berlin and had gotten away with it perfectly well. Erik's milky neck and creamy cheeks blushed with indignation whenever we ridiculed Churchill and

Roosevelt. And he was also certain that the West would not countenance his, Erik's, imprisonment; that on the basis of information from the Kuibyshev Transit Prison the Western intelligence services would immediately learn that Erik had not drowned in the Spree River but had been imprisoned in the Soviet Union—and either he would be ransomed or someone would be exchanged for him. (This faith of his in the individual importance of *his own* fate among other prisoners' fates was reminiscent of our own well-intentioned orthodox Soviet Communists.) Notwithstanding our heated arguments, he invited my friend and me to Stockholm whenever we could come. ("Everyone knows us there," he said with a tired smile. "My father virtually maintains the Swedish King's whole court.") For the time being, however, the son of the billionaire had nothing to dry himself with, and I presented him with an extra tattered towel as a gift. And soon they took him away on a prisoner transport.[7]

And the movement of people was endless. Prisoners were brought in and taken away, singly and in groups, and driven off in prisoner transports. Appearing so businesslike on the surface, so planned, this movement was marked by such stupidity that one can hardly believe it.

In 1949 the Special Camps were created. And then and there, on the basis of some summit decision, masses of women were driven from camps in the European North and the Trans-Volga area, through the Sverdlovsk Transit Prison, to Siberia, to Taishet, to Ozerlag. But in 1950 someone found it convenient to assemble

7. Since that time I have asked Swedes I have met or travelers going to Sweden how to find his family. Have they heard anything about such a missing person? The only reply I have received is a smile. The name Andersen in Sweden is like Ivanov in Russia—and there is no such billionaire. And it is only now, twenty-two years later, rereading this book for the last time, that I have suddenly realized: of course, they must have *forbidden* him to give his real name! He must have been warned by Abakumov, of course, that he would be *destroyed* if he did. And so he traveled through the transit prisons in the guise of a Swedish Ivanov. And it was only through unforbidden, secondary details of his biography that he was able to leave behind in the memories of those he encountered by chance some trace of his ruined life. More likely he still thought it could be saved—which was only human—like millions of other rabbits in this book. He thought he would be imprisoned for a while and that thereupon the indignant West would free him. He did not understand the strength of the East. And he did not understand that such a *witness* as himself, who had displayed *such* firmness of will, unheard of in the soft West, could never be released.

Yet perhaps he is still alive even today. (Author's note, 1972.)

all the women not in Ozerlag, but in Dubrovlag—in Temnikov, in Mordvinia. And so all those same women, enjoying all the conveniences of Gulag travel, were dragged through this same Sverdlovsk Transit Prison—to the west. In 1951 new Special Camps were set up in Kemerovo Province (Kamyshlag)—and that turned out to be where the women's labor was required. And those ill-fated women were again put to the torment of being sent to the Kemerovo camps through that same accursed Sverdlovsk Transit Prison. The time came for liberation—but not for all of them. All those women who were left to drag out their terms in the midst of the general Khrushchev relaxation were once again swung out of Siberia through the Sverdlovsk Transit Prison—into Mordvinia: it was thought better to have them all together.

Well, after all, we have our own self-contained economy. The isles are all our own. And the distances aren't so very great for a Russian.

And the same sort of thing happened to individual zeks, the more unfortunate ones. Shendrik was a big, merry, open-faced fellow, and he *labored honestly,* as they say, in one of the Kuibyshev camps and had no intimation of the evil fate overtaking him. But this evil fate struck nonetheless. An urgent order arrived at the camp—not just from anybody but from the Minister of Internal Affairs himself! (And how could the Minister know of Shendrik's existence?) The order was to deliver this Shendrik to Prison No. 18 in Moscow immediately. They grabbed him, dragged him off to the Kuibyshev Transit Prison, and from there to Moscow with no delay. But not to some Prison No. 18; instead, with all the rest, he went to the widely known Krasnaya Presnya Prison. (Shendrik didn't know about any Prison No. 18. No one had told him.) But his misfortune did not drowse. No more than two days had passed before they *jerked* him onto a prisoner transport again and this time took him all the way to Pechora. The landscape outside the train window grew ever sparser and grimmer. Shendrik was alarmed: he knew there was an order from the Minister, and here they were rapidly hauling him off to the North, and that meant that the Minister had some awful *evidence* against him. In addition to all the other torments of the trip, they stole three days of bread rations from him while he was en route. And by the time he got to Pechora he was staggering. Pechora greeted

him inhospitably. They drove him out to work in the wet snow, hungry and unsettled. In two days he never had a chance to dry out his shirts nor even a chance to stuff his mattress with pine needles. And right then they ordered him to turn in everything he had that was government issue and once again they scooped him up and whisked him still farther—to Vorkuta. It seemed quite evident from everything that had happened that the Minister was determined to destroy Shendrik, and not him alone but the entire group in his prisoner transport. At Vorkuta they didn't touch Shendrik for a whole month. He went out *to general-assignment work,* even though he had not yet recovered from his travels, but he had begun to reconcile himself to his Arctic fate. And then suddenly one day they called him out of the mine, and chased him off breathless to the camp to turn in everything he had that was government issue, and in one hour's time he was being carried off to the south. Now by this time it had already begun to smell of personal vengeance! They took him to Moscow Prison No. 18. They held him in the cell there for one month. And then he was summoned to some lieutenant colonel who asked him: "Where the hell have you been? Are you really a mechanical engineer?" And Shendrik confessed that he was. And then they took him off to none other than, yes, the Paradise Islands! (Yes, there are such islands in the Archipelago!)

This coming and going of people, these destinies, and these stories greatly enliven the transit prisons. And the old camp veterans advise newcomers: Lie down and take it easy. They feed you the guaranteed minimum here,[8] and you don't have to tire your back. And when it's not crowded you can sleep as much as you want to. So just stretch out and lie there from one handout of gruel to the next. The food is sparse, but the sleeping is good. Only those who know what *general-assignment* work is in the camps will understand that a transit prison is a rest home, a happiness on our path. And one more advantage too: when you sleep in the daytime the hours pass more quickly. If you can just kill off the day, the night will go away on its own.

True, recalling that labor created the human being and that only labor can reform the criminal, and sometimes having auxiliary projects, and sometimes acting as subcontractors in order

8. The rations guaranteed by Gulag when no work is being done.

to keep up their financial end, the bosses of transit prisons might sometimes even drive their loafing transit manpower out to labor.

The work at that same Kotlas Transit Prison before the war was not the least bit easier than in a regular camp. In the course of a winter day six or seven weakened prisoners were harnessed to a tractor (!) sledge and had to drag it *seven* miles along the Dvina River to the mouth of the Vychegda. They got stuck in snow and fell down, and the sledges got stuck. And it would seem that any work more wearing and debilitating could hardly have been thought up! But it turned out that this wasn't the actual work, but merely the warm-up. There at the mouth of the Vychegda, they had to load *thirteen* cubic yards of firewood on the sledges—and the same people harnessed in the same way (Repin is no longer with us, and this is no subject for our new artists; it is merely a crude reproduction from nature) had to haul the sledges back to their transit-prison home. Now what does a camp have to offer after that! You wouldn't even survive to get there. (The work-brigade leader for that task was Kolupayev, and the work horses were electrical engineer Dmitriyev, quartermaster corps Lieutenant Colonel Belyayev, and Vasily Vlasov, who is already familiar to us; but not all the other names can be collected at this date.)

During the war the Arzamas Transit Prison fed its prisoners beet tops and at the same time put them to work on a permanent basis. There were garment shops, a footgear-felting shop (where woolen fibers were fulled in hot water and acids).

In the summer of 1945 we went out of the stiflingly stagnant cells of Krasnaya Presnya to work as volunteers: for the right to breathe air the whole day long; for the right to sit unhurried and unhindered in a quiet plank latrine (an incentive that is often overlooked!) heated by the August sun (and these were the days of Potsdam and Hiroshima), listening to the peaceful buzzing of a lonely bee; and, last, for the right to get an extra quarter-pound of bread at night. They took us to the wharves of the Moscow River, where timber was being unloaded. It was our job to roll the logs off some of the piles, carry them over and stack them in other piles. We spent a good deal more strength than we received extra food in compensation. Nonetheless we enjoyed going out to work there.

I often have to blush at my recollections of my younger years (and that's where my younger years were spent!). But whatever casts you down also teaches you a lot. And it turned out that as a residue of the officer's shoulder boards, which had trembled and fluttered on my shoulders for two years in all, some kind of poisonous golden dust had settled in the empty space between my ribs. On that river wharf, which was a camplet too, there was also a compound with watchtowers surrounding it. We were merely transient, temporary work sloggers, and there had been no talk at all, no rumor, that we might be allowed to stay and serve out our terms there. But when they formed us up for the first time, and the work-assignment foreman looked down the line to pick out temporary work-brigade leaders, my worthless heart was bursting under my woolen field shirt: Me, me, pick me!

I was not chosen. But why did I want it? I would only have made further shameful mistakes.

Oh, how hard it is to part with power! This one has to understand.

■

There was a time when Krasnaya Presnya became the virtual capital of Gulag—in the sense that no matter where you went, you couldn't bypass it, just like Moscow. Just as when one travels in the Soviet Union it is more convenient to proceed from Tashkent to Sochi and from Chernigov to Minsk via Moscow, they dragged the prisoners there from all over and sent them off all over via Presnya. And that was the way it was when I was there. Presnya was at the point of breakdown from overcrowding. They built a supplementary building. Only the through trains of cattle cars carrying those who had been sentenced right at counterintelligence bypassed Moscow on the circle line around it, which, as it happened, went right past Presnya, perhaps even saluting it with a whistle on the way.

But we do have a ticket when we come to Moscow as free passengers in transit, and we hope sooner or later to proceed in the desired direction. At Presnya at the end of the war and just after, not only the prisoners who arrived there but even the very highest-ranking officials and even the heads of Gulag itself were

unable to predict who would proceed where. At that time the prison system had not yet crystallized as it had by the fifties, and there were no routes and no destinations were indicated for anybody—except perhaps for service instructions: "Keep under strict guard"; "To be employed only on general-assignment work." The convoy sergeants carried the bundles of prison *cases,* torn folders tied somehow with twine or ersatz cotton string made of paper, into a separate wooden building that housed the prison offices, and tossed them onto shelves, on tables, under tables, under chairs, and simply on the floor in the aisle (just as their subject prisoners lay in the cells). They became untied and got scattered and mixed up. One room, a second, and a third got filled with those mixed-up *cases.* Secretaries from the prison office, well-fed, lazy, free women in bright-colored dresses, sweated in the heat, fanned themselves and flirted with prison and convoy officers. None of them wanted to or had the strength to pick a way through that chaos. And yet the trainloads had to be dispatched in the red trains—several times a week. And every day a hundred people had to be sent out on trucks to nearby camps. The *case* of every zek had to be sent with him. So just who was going to work on all that long-drawn-out mess? Who was there to sort out the cases and select the prisoners for the transports?

It was entrusted to several work-assignment supervisors from among the transit-prison trusties—who were either "*bitches*" or "*half-breeds.*"[9] They moved freely through the prison corridors, entered the prison office, and were the ones who decided whether your *case* would be put in a *bad* prisoner transport or whether they would really exert themselves, search long and hard, and put it in a *good* one. (The newcomers were not mistaken in thinking that there were whole camps which were death camps, and they were right about that, but their idea that there were some that were "good" was simply a delusion. There were no good camps, but only certain easier duties within them—and they could only be sorted out on the spot.) The fact that the prisoner's whole future depended on such another prisoner, with whom one ought perhaps to find the chance *to talk* (even if via the bath attendant),

9. "Half-breeds" or "mulattoes" (polutsvetnye in Russian) were prisoners who had grown spiritually close to the thieves and tried to imitate them, but who had nonetheless not been accepted by the thieves' *law.*

and whose hand one ought perhaps *to grease* (even if via the storage room keeper), was worse than if his fortunes had simply been determined blindly by a roll of the dice. This invisible and unrealized opportunity—to go south to Nalchik instead of north to Norilsk in return for a leather jacket, to go to Serebryanny Bor outside Moscow instead of Taishet in Siberia for a couple of pounds of fat bacon (and perhaps to lose both the leather jacket and the fat bacon for nothing at all)—only aggravated and fatigued tired souls. Maybe someone did manage to arrange it, maybe someone got himself fixed up that way, but most blessed of all were those who had nothing to give or who spared themselves all that anxiety.

Submissiveness to fate, the total abdication of your own will in the shaping of your life, the recognition that it was impossible to guess the best and the worst ahead of time but that it was easy to take a step you would reproach yourself for—all this freed the prisoner from any bondage, made him calmer, and even ennobled him.

And thus it was that the prisoners lay in rows in the cells, and their fates lay in undisturbed piles in the rooms of the prison office. And the assignment supervisors took the files from the particular corner where it was easiest to get at them. And some zeks had to spend two or three months gasping in this accursed Presnya while others would whiz through it with the speed of a shooting star. As a result of all that congestion, haste, and disorder with the *cases,* sometimes *sentences got switched* at Presnya (and at other transit prisons as well). This didn't affect the 58's, because their prison terms, in Maxim Gorky's phrase, were "Terms" with a capital letter, were intended to be long, and even when they seemed to be nearing their end they just never got there anyway. But it made sense for big thieves and murderers to switch with some stupid nonpolitical offender. And so they or their accomplices would inch up to such an individual and question him with interest and concern. And he, not knowing that a short-termer at a transit prison isn't supposed to disclose anything about himself, would innocently tell them that his name was, for example, Vasily Parfenych Yevrashkin, that he was born in 1913, that he lived in Semidubye and had been born there. And his term was one year, Article 109, "Negligence." And then Yevrashkin was

asleep or maybe not even asleep, but there was such a racket in the cell and there was such a crowd at the swill trough in the door that he couldn't make his way there and listen, while on the other side of it in the corridor they were rapidly muttering a list of names for a prisoner transport. Some of the names were shouted from the door into the cell, but not Yevrashkin's because hardly had the name been read out in the corridor than an urka, a thief, had obsequiously (and they *can* be obsequious when it's necessary) shoved up his snout and answered quickly and quietly: "Vasily Parfenych, born 1913, village of Semidubye, 109, one year," and ran off to get his things. The real Yevrashkin yawned, lay back on his bunk, and patiently waited to be called the next day, and the next week, and the next month, and then he made so bold as to bother the prison superintendent: why hadn't he been taken in a prisoner transport? (And every day in all the cells they kept calling out the name of some Zvyaga.) And when a month later or a half-year later they got around to combing through all the *cases* by calling the roll, what they had left was just one file—belonging to Zvyaga, a multiple offender, sentenced for a double murder and robbing a store, ten years—and one shy prisoner who was trying to tell everybody that he was Yevrashkin, although you couldn't make anything out from the photo, and so he damn well was Zvyaga and he had to be tucked away in a penalty camp, Ivdellag—because otherwise it would have been necessary to confess that the transit prison had made a mistake. (And as for that other Yevrashkin who had been sent off on a prisoner transport, you wouldn't even be able to find where he had gone—because none of the lists were left. And anyway he had only had a one-year term and had been sent to do farm work without being under guard and got three days off his sentence for every day he worked, or else he had simply run away, and was long since home or, more likely, was already imprisoned again on a new sentence.) There were also eccentrics who *sold* their short terms for a kilo or two of fat bacon. They figured that in any case the authorities would check up and establish their correct identities. And sometimes they did.[10]

10. And, as P. Yakubovich writes in reference to the so-called "cadgers," the sale of prison terms took place in the last century too. It is an ancient prison trick.

During the years when the prisoners' *cases* didn't carry any indication of their final destination, the transit prisons turned into slave markets. The most desired guests at the transit prisons were the *buyers*. This word was heard more and more often in the corridors and cells and was used without any shadow of irony. Just as it became intolerable everywhere in industry simply to sit and wait until things were sent from the center on the basis of allocations, and it was more satisfactory to send one's own "pushers" and "pullers" to get things done—the same thing happened in Gulag: the natives on the islands kept dying off; and even though they cost not one ruble, a count was kept of them, and one had to worry about getting more of them for oneself so there wouldn't be any failure in fulfilling the plan. The *buyers* had to be sharp, have good eyes, and look carefully to see what they were taking so that last-leggers and invalids didn't get shoved off on them. The buyers who picked a transport on the basis of case files were poor buyers. The conscientious merchants demanded that the *merchandise* be displayed alive and bare-skinned for them to inspect. And that was just what they used to say—without smiling—*merchandise*. "Well, what merchandise have you brought?" asked a buyer at the Butyrki station, observing and inspecting the female attributes of seventeen-year-old Ira Kalina.

Human nature, if it changes at all, changes not much faster than the geological face of the earth. And the very same sensations of curiosity, relish, and sizing up which slave-traders felt at the slave-girl markets twenty-five centuries ago of course possessed the Gulag bigwigs in the Usman Prison in 1947, when they, a couple of dozen men in MVD uniform, sat at several desks covered with sheets (this was for their self-importance, since it would have seemed awkward otherwise), and all the women prisoners were made to undress in the box next door and to walk in front of them bare-footed and bare-skinned, turn around, stop, and answer questions. "Drop your hands," they ordered those who had adopted the defensive pose of classic sculpture. (After all, these officers were very seriously selecting bedmates for themselves and their colleagues.)

And so it was that for the new prisoner various manifestations foreshadowed the camp battle of the morrow and cast their pall over the innocent spiritual joys of the transit prison.

For just two nights they put a *special-assignment prisoner* in our cell in Krasnaya Presnya. And he was next to me in the bunk. He traveled about with special-assignment orders, which meant that an invoice had been filled out in Central Administration indicating that he was a construction technician and could be used only in that capacity in his new location, and this went with him from camp to camp. The special-assignment prisoner was traveling in the common Stolypin cars and was kept in the common cells of the transit prisons, but he wasn't nervous; he was protected by his personal document, and he wouldn't be driven out to fell timber. A cruel and determined expression was the principal trait of this camp veteran's face. He had already served out the greater part of his term. (And I did not yet realize that this exact expression would in time etch itself on all our faces, because a cruel and determined expression is the national hallmark of the Gulag islanders. People with soft, conciliatory expressions die out quickly on the islands.) He observed our naïve floundering with an ironic smile, just as people look at two-week-old puppies.

What should we expect in camp? Taking pity on us, he taught us:

"From your very first step in camp everyone will try to deceive and plunder you. Trust no one but yourself. Look around quickly: someone may be sneaking up on you to bite you. Eight years ago I arrived at Kargopollag just as innocent and just as naïve as you are now. They unloaded us from two trains, and the convoy prepared to lead us the six miles to the camp through the deep, crumbly snow. Three sleds came up beside us. Some hefty chap whom the convoy didn't interfere with came over to us and said: 'Brothers, put your things on the sleds and we will carry them there for you.' We remembered reading in books that prisoners' belongings were carried on carts. And we thought: It isn't going to be all that inhuman in camp; they are concerned about us. And we loaded our things on the sleds. They left. And we never saw them again, not even an empty wrapper."

"But how can that happen? Isn't there any law there?"

"Don't ask idiotic questions. There is a law there. The law of the taiga, of the jungle. But as for *justice*—there never has been any in Gulag and there never will be. That Kargopol incident was simply a symbol of Gulag. And you have to get used to something else too: in camp no one ever does anything for nothing, no

one ever does anything out of the generosity of his heart. You have to pay for everything. If someone proposes something to you that is unselfish, disinterested, you can be sure it's a dirty trick, a provocation. The main thing is: avoid *general-assignment work*. Avoid it from the day you arrive. If you land in *general-assignment work* that first day, then you are lost, and this time for keeps."

"*General-assignment* work?"

"General-assignment work—that is the main and basic work performed in any given camp. Eighty percent of the prisoners work at it, and they all die off. All. And then they bring new ones in to take their places and they again are sent to general-assignment work. Doing this work, you expend the last of your strength. And you are always hungry. And always wet. And shoeless. And you are given short rations and short everything else. And put in the worst barracks. And they won't give you any treatment when you're ill. The only ones who *survive* in camps are those who try at any price not to be put on general-assignment work. From the first day."

"At any price?"

"At any price!"

At Krasnaya Presnya I assimilated and accepted this altogether unexaggerated advice of the cruel special-assignment prisoner, forgetting only to ask him one thing: How do you measure that price? How high do you go?

Chapter 3

■

The Slave Caravans

It was painful to travel in a Stolypin, unbearable in a Black Maria, and the transit prison would soon wear you down—and it might just be better to skip the whole lot and go straight to camp in the red cattle cars.

As always, the interests of the state and the interests of the individual coincided here. It was also to the state's advantage to dispatch sentenced prisoners straight to the camps by direct routing and thus avoid overloading the city trunk-line railroads, automotive transport, and transit-camp personnel. They had long since grasped this fact in Gulag, and it had been taken to heart: witness the caravans of *red cows* (red cattle cars), the caravans of barges, and, where there were no rails and no water, the caravans on foot (after all, prisoners could not be allowed to exploit the labor of horses and camels).

The red trains were always a help when the courts in some particular place were working swiftly or the transit facilities were overcrowded. It was possible in this way to dispatch a large number of prisoners in one batch. That is how the millions of peasants were transported in 1929–1931. That is how they exiled Leningrad from Leningrad. That is how they populated the Kolyma in the thirties: every day Moscow, the capital of our country, belched out one such train to Sovetskaya Gavan, to Vanino Port. And each provincial capital also sent off red trainloads, but not on a daily schedule. That is how they removed the Volga German Republic to Kazakhstan in 1941, and later all

the rest of the exiled nations were sent off in the same way. In 1945 Russia's prodigal sons and daughters were sent from Germany, from Czechoslovakia, from Austria, and simply from western border areas—whoever had gotten there on his own—in such trains as these. In 1949 that is how they collected the 58's in Special Camps.

The Stolypins follow routine railroad schedules. And the red trains travel on imposing waybills, signed by important Gulag generals. The Stolypins cannot go to an empty site, to "nowhere"; their destination must always be a station, even if it's in some nasty little two-bit town with some preliminary detention cells in an attic. But the red trains can go into emptiness: and wherever one does go, there immediately rises right next to it, out of the sea of the steppe or the sea of the taiga, a new island of the Archipelago.

Not every red cattle car is ready as is to transport prisoners. First it has to be prepared. But not in the sense some of our readers might expect: that the coal or lime it carried before it was assigned to carry people has to be swept out and the car cleaned—that isn't always done. Nor in the sense that it needs to be calked and have a stove installed if it is winter. (When the section of the railroad from Knyazh-Pogost to Ropcha was being built and wasn't yet part of the general railroad network, they immediately began to transport prisoners on it—in freight cars without either stoves or bunks. In winter the zeks lay on the icy, snowy floor and weren't even given any hot food, because the train could make it all the way through this section in less than a day. Whoever can in imagination lie there like them and survive those eighteen to twenty hours shall indeed survive! Here is what was involved in preparing a red cattle car for prisoners: The floors, walls, and ceilings had to be tested for strength and checked for holes or faults. Their small windows had to be barred. A hole had to be cut in the floor to serve as a drain, and specially protected by sheet iron firmly nailed down all around it. The necessary number of platforms on which convoy guards would stand with machine guns had to be evenly distributed throughout the train, and if there were too few, more had to be built. Access to the roofs of the cars had to be provided. Sites for searchlights had to be selected and supplied with uninterrupted electric power.

Long-handled wooden mallets had to be procured. A passenger car had to be hooked on for the staff, and if there wasn't one, then instead heated freight cars had to be prepared for the chief of convoy, the Security officer, and the convoy. Kitchens had to be built—for the convoy and for the prisoners. And only after all this had been done was it all right to walk along the cattle cars and chalk on the sides: "Special Equipment" or "Perishable Goods." (In her chapter, "The Seventh Car," Yevgeniya Ginzburg described a transport of red cars very vividly, and her description largely obviates the necessity of presenting details here.)

The preparation of the train has been completed—and ahead lies the complicated combat operation of *loading* the prisoners into the cars. At this point there are two important and obligatory *objectives:*

- to conceal the loading from ordinary citizens
- to terrorize the prisoners

To conceal the loading from the local population was necessary because approximately a thousand people were being loaded on the train simultaneously (at least twenty-five cars), and this wasn't your little group from a Stolypin that could be led right past the townspeople. Everyone knew, of course, that arrests were being made every day and every hour, but no one was to be horrified by the sight of large numbers of them *together.* In Orel in 1938 you could hardly hide the fact that there was no home in the city where there hadn't been arrests, and weeping women in their peasant carts blocked the square in front of the Orel Prison just as in Surikov's painting *The Execution of the Streltsy.* (Oh, who one day will paint this latter-day tragedy for us? But no one will. It's not fashionable, not fashionable. . . .) But you don't need to show our Soviet people an entire trainload of them collected in one day. (And in Orel that year there were.) And young people mustn't see it either—for young people are our future. Therefore it was done only at night—and every night, too, each and every night, and that was the way it went for several months. The black line of prisoners to be transported was driven from the prison to the station on foot. (Meanwhile the Black Marias were busy making new arrests.) True, the women realized, the women somehow found out, and at night they came to the station from

all over the city and kept watch over the trains on the siding. They ran along the cars, tripping over the ties and rails, and shouting at every car: "Is So-and-so in there?" "Is So-and-so in there?" And they ran on to the next one, and others ran up to this one: "Is So-and-so in there?" And suddenly an answer would come from the sealed car: "I'm in here. I'm here!" Or else: "Keep looking for him. He's in another car." Or else: "Women! Listen! My wife is somewhere out there, near the station. Run and tell her."

These scenes, unworthy of our contemporary world, testify only to the then inept organization of train embarkations. The mistakes were noted, and after a certain night the trains were surrounded in depth by cordons of snarling and barking police dogs.

And in Moscow, the loading into red cattle cars from the old Sretenka Transit Prison (which prisoners no longer remember) or from Krasnaya Presnya took place only at night; that was the rule.

However, although the convoy had no use for the superfluous light of the sun by day, on the other hand they made use of suns by night—the searchlights. They were more efficient since they could be concentrated on the necessary area, where the prisoners were seated on the earth in a frightened pack awaiting the command: "Next unit of five—stand up! To the car—on the run!" (Only on the run, so as not to have time to look around, to think things over, to run as though chased by the dogs, afraid of nothing so much as falling down.) On that uneven path. Up the loading ramp, scrambling. And clear, hostile searchlight beams not only provided light but were an important theatrical element in terrorizing the prisoners, along with yells, threats, gunstock blows on those who fell behind, and the order: "Sit down." (And sometimes, as in the station square of that same Orel: "Down on your knees." And like some new breed of believers at prayer, the whole thousand would get down on their knees.) Along with that running to the car, quite unnecessary except for intimidation—for which it was very important. Along with the enraged barking of the dogs. Along with the leveled gun barrels (rifles or automatic pistols, depending on the decade). And the main thing was to undermine, to crush the prisoner's will power so he wouldn't

think of trying to escape, so that for a long time he wouldn't notice his new advantage: the fact that he had exchanged a stone-walled prison for a railroad car with thin plank walls.

But in order to load one thousand prisoners into railroad cars at night so precisely, the prison had to start jerking them out of their cells and processing them for transport the morning before, and the convoy had to spend the entire day on a long-drawn-out and strict procedure of checking them in while still in prison and then holding those who'd been checked in for long hours, not, of course, in the cells by now, but in the courtyard, on the ground, so as not to mix them up with the prisoners still belonging in the prison. Thus for the prisoner the loading at night was only a relief after a whole day of torment.

Besides the ordinary counts, verifications, hair clipping, clothing roasting, and baths, the core of the preparation for the prisoner transport was general *frisking*. This search was carried out not by the prison but by the convoy receiving the prisoners. The convoy was expected, in accordance with the directives regarding the red transports and in accordance with their own operational requirements, to carry out this search so that the prisoners would not be left in possession of anything that might help them to escape; to take away: everything that could saw or cut; all powders (tooth powder, sugar, salt, tobacco, tea) so they could not be used to blind the convoy; all string, cord, twine, belts, and straps because they could all be used in escaping (and that meant all kinds of straps! and so they cut off the straps which held up the artificial limb of a one-legged man—and the cripple had to carry his artificial leg on his shoulder and hop with the help of those on either side of him). The rest of the things—all "valuables" and suitcases too—were, according to instructions, supposed to be checked and carried in a special baggage car and returned to their owners at the end of the journey.

Yet the power of the Moscow directive was weak and might be ignored by the Vologda or the Kuibyshev convoy, while the power of the convoy over the prisoners was very corporeal, very real. And this fact was crucial to the third objective of the loading operation:

- in simple justice to take all the good things they possess from enemies of the people for the use of its sons

"Sit down." "On your knees!" "Strip!" In these statutory orders of the convoy lay the basic power one could not argue with. After all, a naked person loses his self-assurance. He cannot straighten up proudly and speak as an equal to people who are still clothed. A search begins. (Kuibyshev, summer of 1949.) Naked prisoners approach, carrying their possessions and the clothes they've taken off. A mass of armed soldiers surrounds them. It doesn't look as though they are going to be led to a prisoner transport but as though they are going to be shot immediately or put to death in a gas chamber—and in that mood a human being ceases to concern himself with his possessions. The convoy does everything with intentional brusqueness, rudely, sharply, not speaking one word in an ordinary human voice. After all, the purpose is to terrify and dishearten. Suitcases are shaken apart, and things fall all over the floor and are then stacked up in separate piles. Cigarette cases, billfolds, and other pitiful "valuables" are all taken away and thrown without any identifying marks into a *barrel* that is standing nearby. (And, for some reason, the fact that this particular receptacle isn't a safe, or a trunk, or a box, but a barrel particularly depresses the naked prisoners there, and it seems so terribly futile to protest.) The naked prisoner has all he can do simply to snatch up his well-searched rags from the floor and knot them together or tie them up in a blanket. Felt boots? You can check them, throw them over there, sign for them on the list! (You aren't the one who gets the receipt, but *you* are the one who signs for having surrendered them, certifying that you threw them onto the pile!) And when at dusk the last truck leaves the prison yard with the prisoners, they see the convoy guards rushing to grab the best leather suitcases from the pile and select the best cigarette cases from the barrel. And after them, the jailers scurry for their booty, too, and last of all the transit prison *trusties*.

That is what it cost to spend one day to get to the cattle car. And now the prisoners have clambered with relief up onto the splintered planks of the bunks. But what kind of relief is this, what kind of heated cattle car is this? Once again they are squeezed in a nutcracker between cold and starvation, between the thieves and the convoy.

If there are thieves in a cattle car (and they are, of course, not kept separate in the red trains either) they take the best places, as is traditional—on the upper bunks by the window. That's in summer. So we can guess where their places are in winter. Next to the stove, of course, in a tight ring around the stove. As the former thief Minayev recalls: in 1949, during a severe cold wave, they were issued only *three pails* of coal for their car for the entire journey from Voronezh to Kotlas, lasting several days.[1] And in this crisis, the thieves not only occupied the places around the stove, and not only took all the *suckers'* warm things away from them and put them on, but didn't even hesitate to take their *footcloths* out of their shoes and wind them around their own feet. You today, me tomorrow. It was somewhat worse with food —the thieves took charge of the whole ration for the car and then kept the best for themselves along with whatever else they needed. Loshchilin recalls a three-day prisoner transport from Moscow to Perebory in 1937. They didn't cook anything hot on the train for such a short journey and handed out only dry rations. The thieves took the best for themselves but gave the others permission to divide up the bread and the herring; and that meant they weren't hungry. When the ration was hot and the thieves were *in charge of distributing it,* they divided up the gruel among themselves. (A three-week transport from Kishinev to Pechora in 1945.) With all this, the thieves didn't scruple to engage also in plain and simple robbery en route: they noticed an Estonian's gold teeth and they pushed him down and knocked out the teeth with a poker.

The zeks considered the hot food the real advantage of the red trains: at remote stations (again where people couldn't see them) the trains stopped and gruel and porridge were doled out to the cars. But they even managed to give out the hot food in such a way that things went wrong. They might (as on that same Kishinev train) pour out the gruel in the same pails in which they issued coal—there being nothing to wash them out with. Because drinking water was also rationed on the train and was in even shorter supply than gruel. And so you gulped down the gruel, your teeth gritting on pieces of coal. Or they brought the gruel and the hot cereal to the car and didn't issue enough bowls

1. In a letter to me in the *Literaturnaya Gazeta,* November 29, 1963.

—twenty-five instead of forty—and promptly ordered: "Come on, come on, faster, faster. We have other cars to feed too, not just you." How then could you eat, how could you divide it up? You couldn't dish it out equitably on the basis of bowls, and that meant you had to estimate each portion so as not to give out too much. And those to be served first would shout: "Stir it! Stir it!" And the last kept silent: there would be more on the bottom. The first were eating and the last waiting. They would have liked the others to eat faster, because they were hungry, and meanwhile the gruel would be getting cold in the barrel and they were also being hurried from outside: "Well, have you finished? Come on now, get a move on!" And then they served the second contingent —not more and not less and not thicker and not thinner than the first. And then came estimating the leftovers correctly and pouring them out two portions to a bowl. And all this time forty people don't so much eat as watch the sharing out and suffer.

They don't heat the car, they don't protect the other prisoners from the thieves, they don't give you enough to drink, and they don't give you enough to eat—but on the other hand they don't let you sleep either. During the day the convoy can see the whole train very clearly and the tracks behind them, and can be sure that no one has jumped out the side or slipped down on the rails. But at night vigilance possesses them. With long-handled wooden mallets (the standard Gulag equipment) they knock resoundingly on every board of the car at every stop: maybe someone has sawed through it. And at certain stops the door of the car is thrown open. The light of the lantern or the beam of the searchlight: "Checkup!" And this means: Get on your feet and be ready to go where they tell you—everyone run to the left or to the right. The convoy guards jump inside with their mallets (others have ranged themselves in a semicircle outside with automatic pistols), and they point: to the left! That means that those on the left are in place and those on the right must get over there on the jump like fleas hopping over each other and landing where they can. And whoever isn't nimble, whoever gets caught daydreaming, gets whacked on the ribs and back with the mallets to give him more energy. And by this time the convoy jackboots are already trampling your pauper's pallet and all your lousy *duds* are being thrown in every direction and everywhere there are

lights and hammering: Have you sawed through any place? No. Then the convoy guards stand in the middle and begin to shift you from left to right, counting: "First . . . second . . . third." It would be quite enough to count simply with a wave of the finger, but if that were done, it wouldn't be terrifying, and so it is more vivid, less subject to error, more energetic and faster, to beat out that count with the same mallet on your ribs, shoulders, heads, wherever it happens to land. They have counted up to forty. So now they will go about their tossing, lighting up, and hammering at the other end of the car. It's all over finally and the car is locked up. You can go back to sleep till the next stop. (And one can't really say that the anxiety of the convoy guard is entirely unfounded—because those who know how can escape from the red cattle cars. For instance, they knock on a board to test it and find it has been partially sawed through. Or suddenly in the morning, when the gruel is being distributed, they see that there are several shaved faces among the unshaven ones. And they surround the car with their automatic pistols: "Hand over your knives!" And this is really just petty bravado on the part of the thieves and their allies: they got tired of being unshaven, and now they are going to have to turn in their razor.)

The red train differs from other long-distance trains in that those who have embarked on it do not know whether or not they will disembark. When they unloaded a trainload from the Leningrad prisons (1942) in Solikamsk, the entire embankment was covered with corpses, and only a few got there alive. In the winters of 1944–1945 and 1945–1946 in the village of Zheleznodorozhny (Knyazh-Pogost), as in all the main rail junctions in the North, the prisoner trains from liberated territories (the Baltic states, Poland, Germany) arrived with one or two carloads of corpses tacked on behind. That meant that en route they had carefully taken the corpses out of the cars that contained the living passengers and put them in the dead cars. But not always. There were many occasions when they found out who was still alive and who was dead only when they opened up the car after arriving at the Sukhobezvodnaya (Unzhlag) Station. Those who didn't come out were dead.

It was terrifying and deadly to travel this way in winter because the convoy, with all its bother about security, wasn't able

to haul coal for twenty-five stoves. But it wasn't so cushy to travel this way in hot weather either. Two of the four tiny windows were tightly sealed and the car roof would overheat and the convoy wasn't about to exert itself in hauling water for a thousand prisoners—after all, they couldn't even manage to give just one Stolypin car enough to drink. The prisoners considered April and September the best months for transports. But even the best of seasons was too short if the train was en route for *three months.* (Leningrad to Vladivostok in 1935.) And if such a long trip is in prospect, then arrangements have been made for both political indoctrination of the convoy soldiers and spiritual care of the imprisoned souls: in a separate railroad car attached to such a train travels a "godfather"—a Security officer. He has made his preparations for the prisoner-transport train back in prison, and prisoners are assigned to cars not simply at random but according to lists he has validated. He is the one who appoints the monitor in each car and who has instructed and assigned a stool pigeon to each. At long stops he finds some pretext for summoning both from the car and asks what the people are talking about in there. And any such Security chief would be ashamed to finish the journey without signed and sealed results. And so right there en route he puts someone under interrogation, and lo and behold! by the time they reach their destination, the prisoner has been handed a new prison term.

No, damn that red cattle car train too, even though it did carry the prisoners straight to their destination without changing trains. Anyone who has ever been in one will never forget it. Just as well get to camp sooner! Just as well arrive sooner.

A human being is all hope and impatience. As if the Security officer in camp will be any more humane or the stoolies any less unscrupulous. It's just the other way around. As if they won't force us to the ground with those same threats and those same police dogs when we arrive: "Sit down!" As if there will be less snow on the ground in camp than what has sifted through into the cattle cars. As if it means that we've already gotten to where we're going when they begin to unload us and won't be carried farther in open flatcars on a narrow-gauge track. (And how can they carry us in open flatcars? How can we be kept under guard? That's a problem for the convoy. And here is how they

do it: They order us to lie down all huddled together and they cover us with one big tarpaulin, like the sailors in the motion picture *Potemkin* before they're to be executed. And say thank you for the tarpaulin too. In the North, in October, Olenyev and his comrades had the luck to have to sit in open flatcars all day long. They had already embarked, but no locomotive had come. First it rained. Then it froze. And the zeks' rags froze on them.) The tiny train will jerk and toss as it moves, and the sides of the flatcar will begin to crack and break, and the bouncing will hurl someone off the car and under the wheels. And here is a riddle: If one is traveling sixty miles from Dudinka through Arctic frost in open flatcars on the narrow-gauge track, then where are the thieves going to be? Answer: In the middle of each flatcar, so the livestock around them will keep them warm and keep them from falling under the train themselves. Right answer! Question: What will the zeks see at the end of this narrow-gauge track (1939)? Will there be any buildings there? No, not a one. Any dugouts? Yes, but already occupied, not for them. And does that mean that the first thing they do will be to dig themselves dugouts? No, because how can they dig in the Arctic winter? Instead, they will be sent out to mine metal. And where will they live? What—live? Oh, yes, live . . . They will live in tents.

But will there always be a narrow-gauge track? No, of course not. The train arrived: Yertsovo Station, February, 1938. The railroad cars were opened up at night. Bonfires were lit alongside the train and disembarkation took place by their light; then a count-off, forming up, and a count-off again. The temperature was 32 degrees below zero Centigrade. The prisoners' transport train had come from the Donbas, and all the prisoners had been arrested back in the summer and were wearing low shoes, oxfords, even sandals. They tried to warm themselves at the fires, but the guards chased them away: that's not what the fires were there for; they were there to give light. Fingers grew numb almost instantly. The snow filled the thin shoes and didn't even melt. There was no mercy and the order was given: "Fall in! Form up! One step to the right or left and we'll fire without warning. Forward march!" The dogs on their chains howled at their favorite command, at the excitement of the moment. The convoy guards marched ahead in their sheepskin coats—and the doomed

prisoners in their summer clothes marched through deep snow on a totally untraveled road somewhere into the dark taiga, nary a light ahead. The northern lights gleamed—for them it was their first and probably their last view of them. The fir trees crackled in the frost. The ill-shod prisoners paced and trod down the snow, their feet and legs growing numb from the cold.

Or, as another example, here is a January, 1945, arrival at Pechora. ("Our armies have captured Warsaw! Our armies have cut off East Prussia!") An empty snowy field. The prisoners were tossed out of the cars, made to sit down in the snow by sixes, painstakingly counted off, miscounted, and counted again. They were ordered to stand up and then were harried through a snowy virgin waste for four miles. This prisoner transport was also from the south—from Moldavia. And everyone was wearing leather shoes. The police dogs were right on their heels, and the dogs pushed the zeks in the last row with their paws on their backs, breathing on the backs of their heads. (Two priests were in that row—old gray-haired Father Fyodor Florya and young Father Viktor Shipovalnikov, who was helping to hold him up.) What a use for police dogs? No, what self-restraint it showed on the dogs' part! After all, they wanted to bite so badly!

Finally they arrived. There was a camp reception bath; they had to undress in one cabin, run across the yard naked, and wash in another. But all this was bearable now: the worst was over. They had *arrived*. Twilight fell. And all of a sudden it was learned there was no room for them; the camp wasn't ready to receive the prisoner transport. And after the bath, the prisoners were again formed up, counted, surrounded by dogs, and were marched *back* to their prisoner-transport train all those four miles, but this time in the dark. And the car doors had been left open all those hours, and had lost even their earlier, pitiful measure of warmth, and then all the coal had been burned up by the end of the journey and there was nowhere to get any more now. And in these circumstances, they froze all night and in the morning were given dried carp (and anyone who wanted to drink could chew snow), and then marched back along the same road again.

And this, after all, was an episode with a *happy* ending. In this case, the camp at least *existed*. If it couldn't accept them today, it would tomorrow. But it was not at all unusual for the red trains

to arrive nowhere, and the end of the journey often marked the opening day of a *new* camp. They might simply stop somewhere in the taiga under the northern lights and nail to a fir tree a sign reading: "FIRST OLP."[2] And there they would chew on dried fish for a week and try to mix their flour with snow.

But if a camp had been set up there even two weeks earlier, that already spelled comfort; hot food would have been cooked; and even if there were no bowls, the first and second courses would nonetheless be mixed together in washbasins for six prisoners to eat from at the same time; and this group of six would form a circle (there were no tables or chairs yet), and two of them would hold onto the handles of the washbasin with their left hands and would eat with their right hands, taking turns. Am I repeating myself? No, this was Perebory in 1937, as reported by Loshchilin. It is not I who am repeating myself, but Gulag.

Next they would assign the newcomers brigade leaders from among the camp veterans, who would quickly *teach them to live,* to make do, to submit to discipline, and to cheat. And from their very first morning, they would march off to work because the chimes of the clock of the great Epoch were striking and could not wait. The Soviet Union is not, after all, some Tsarist hard-labor Akatui for you, where prisoners got three days' rest after they arrived.[3]

■

Gradually the economy of the Archipelago prospered. New railroad branch lines were built. And soon they were transporting prisoners by train to many places that had been reached only by water not long before. But there are natives of the Archipelago still alive who can tell you how they went down the Izhma River in genuine ancient Russian river galleys, one hundred to a boat, and the prisoners themselves did the rowing. They can tell you how they traveled in fishing smacks down the northern rivers of Ukhta, Usa, and Pechora to their native camp. Zeks were shipped to Vorkuta in barges: on large barges to Adzvavom,

2. OLP = *Otdelny Lagerny Punkt* = Separate Camp Site.
3. P. F. Yakubovich, *V Mire Otverzhennykh.*

where there was a transshipping point for Vorkutlag, and from there only a stone's throw, let's say, to Ust-Usa, on a flat-bottomed barge for ten days. The whole barge was alive with lice, and the convoy allowed the prisoners to go up on deck one by one and brush the parasites off into the water. The river transports did not proceed directly to their destination either, but were sometimes interrupted to transfer for transshipment, or for portage, or for stretches covered on foot.

And they had their own transit prisons in this area—built out of poles or tents—Ust-Usa, Pomozdino, Shchelya-Yur, where they had their own special system of regulations. They had their own convoy rules, and of course, their own special commands, and their own special convoy tricks, and their own special methods of tormenting the zeks. But it's already clear that it is not our task to describe those particular exotica, so we won't even begin.

The Northern Dvina, the Ob, and the Yenisei know when they began to haul prisoners in barges—during the liquidation of the "kulaks." These rivers flowed straight north, and their barges were potbellied and capacious—and it was the only way they could cope with the task of carting all this gray mass from living Russia to the dead North. People were thrown into the trough-like holds and lay there in piles or crawled around like crabs in a basket. And high up on the deck, as though atop a cliff, stood guards. Sometimes they transported this mass out in the open without any cover, and sometimes they covered it with a big tarpaulin—in order not to look at it, or to guard it better, but certainly not to keep off the rain. The journey in such a barge was no longer prisoner transport, but simply death on the installment plan. Anyway, they gave them hardly anything to eat. Then they tossed them out in the tundra—and there they didn't give them anything at all to eat. They just left them there to die, alone with nature.

Prisoner transport by barge on the Northern Dvina (and on the Vychegda) had not died out even by 1940. That was how A. Y. Olenyev was transported. Prisoners in the hold *stood* tightly jammed against each other, and not just for a day either. They urinated in glass jars which were passed from hand to hand and emptied through the porthole. And anything more substantial went right in their pants.

Barge transport on the Yenisei came to be a regular and permanent feature for whole decades. In Krasnoyarsk in the thirties, open-sided sheds were built on the bank, and in the cold Siberian winters the prisoners would shiver there for a day or two while they waited for transportation.[4] The Yenisei prisoner-transport barges were permanently equipped with dark holds three decks deep. The only light was what filtered in through the companionway for the ship's ladder. The convoy lived in a little cabin on deck. Sentries kept watch over the exits from the hold and over the river to make sure that no one escaped by swimming. They didn't go down into the hold, no matter what groans and howls for help might come from there. And the prisoners were never taken up on deck for fresh air. In the prisoner transports of 1937 and 1938, and 1944 and 1945 (and we can guess it must have been the same in the interval), no medical assistance whatever was provided in the hold. The prisoners lay there lined up in two rows, one with their heads toward the side of the barge and the heads of the other row at their feet. The only way to get to the latrine barrels was to walk over them. The latrine barrels were not always emptied in time (imagine lugging that barrel full of sewage up the steep ship's ladder to the deck). They overflowed, and the contents spilled along the deck and seeped down on those below. And people lay there. They were fed gruel from casks hauled along the deck. The servers were prisoners too, and there, in the eternal darkness (today, perhaps, there is electricity), by the light of a portable "Bat" kerosene lamp, they ladled out the food. Such a prisoner transport to Dudinka sometimes took a month. (Nowadays, of course, they can do it in a week.) It sometimes happened that the trip dragged out much longer because of sand bars and other hazards of river travel, and they wouldn't have enough food with them, in which case they just stopped giving out the food for several days at a time. (And later on, of course, they never made up for the days they missed.)

At this point the alert reader can without the author's help add that the thieves were on the upper level inside the hold and closer to the ship's ladder—in other words, to light and air. They had what access they required to the distribution of the bread

4. And V. I. Lenin in 1897 boarded the *St. Nicholas* in the passenger port like a free person.

ration, and if the trip in question was a hard one, they didn't hesitate to *whip away* the *holy crutch* (in other words, they took the gray cattle's rations from them). The thieves whiled away the long journey playing cards, and they made their own decks.[5] They got the stakes for their card games by *frisking* the suckers, searching everyone lying in a particular section of the barge. For a certain length of time they won and lost and rewon and relost their loot, and then it floated up to the convoy. Yes, the reader has now guessed everything: the thieves had the convoy *on the hook;* the convoy either kept the stolen things for themselves or sold them at the wharves and brought the thieves something to eat in exchange.

And what about resistance? It happened—but only rarely. One case has been preserved. In 1950 on such a barge as I have described, except that it was larger—a seagoing barge en route from Vladivostok to Sakhalin—seven unarmed 58's resisted the thieves (in this case *bitches*), who numbered about eighty in all (some with knives, as usual). These *bitches* had searched the whole transport back at Vladivostok transit point *three-ten,* and they had searched it very thoroughly, in no way less efficiently than the jailers; they knew all the hiding places, but no search can ever turn up *everything.* Aware of this, when they were already in the hold they treacherously announced: "Whoever has money can buy makhorka." And Misha Grachev got out three rubles he had hidden in his quilted jacket. And the bitch Volodka Tatarin shouted at him: "You crowbait, why don't you *pay your taxes?*" And he rushed in to take it away. But Master Sergeant Pavel (whose last name has not been recorded) pushed him away. Volodka Tatarin aimed a slingshot—a "V" fork—at Pavel's eyes, and Pavel knocked him off his feet. Immediately twenty to thirty *bitches* moved in on him. And around Grachev and Pavel gathered Volodya Shpakov, a former army captain, Seryezha Potapov, Volodya Reunov, a former army sergeant, Volodya Tretyukin, another former sergeant, and Vasa Kravtsov. And what happened? The whole thing ended after only a few blows had been exchanged. This may have been a matter of the age-old and very real cowardice of the thieves (always concealed behind feigned toughness and devil-may-care insolence); or else

5. V. Shalamov tells about this in detail in his *Ocherki prestupnogo mira* (*Sketches of the Criminal World*).

the proximity of the guard held them back (this being right beneath the hatchway). Or it may have been that on this trip they were saving themselves for a more *important* social task—to seize control of the Aleksandrovsk Transit Prison (the one Chekhov described) and a Sakhalin construction project (seizing control of it, of course, not in order to *construct*) before the *honest thieves* could; at any rate they pulled back, restricting themselves to the threat: "On dry land we'll make *garbage* out of you!" (The battle never took place, and no one made "garbage" out of the boys. And at the Aleksandrovsk transit point the *bitches* met with misfortune: it was already firmly held by the *honest thieves.*)

In steamships to the Kolyma everything was the same as on the barges except that everything was on a larger scale. Strange as it seems, some of the prisoners sent to the Kolyma in several over-age old tubs on the famous expedition led by the ice-breaker *Krasin* in the spring of 1938 are still alive today. On the steamers *Dzhurma, Kulu, Nevostroi, Dneprostroi,* for which the *Krasin* was breaking the way through the spring ice, there were also three decks in the cold, dirty holds, and on these decks, in addition, there were two-story bunks made out of poles. It was not completely dark: there were some kerosene lanterns and lamps. The prisoners were allowed up on deck in batches for fresh air and walks. Three to four thousand prisoners were in each steamer. The voyage took more than a week, and before it was over all the bread brought aboard in Vladivostok got moldy and the ration was reduced from twenty-one to fourteen ounces a day. They also gave out fish, and as for drinking water . . . Well, there's no reason to gloat here, because there were *temporary difficulties* with the water. Here, in contrast to the river transports, there were heavy seas, storms, seasickness. The exhausted, enfeebled people vomited, and didn't have the strength to get up out of their vomit, and all the floors were covered with the nauseating mess.

There was one political incident on the voyage. The steamers had to pass through La Pérouse Strait, very close to the Japanese islands. And at that point the machine guns disappeared from the watchtowers and the convoy guards changed to civilian clothes, the hatches were battened down, and access to the decks was forbidden. According to the ships' papers, foresightedly prepared

back in Vladivostok, they were transporting, God save us, not prisoners but volunteers for work in the Kolyma. A multitude of Japanese small craft and boats hovered about the ships without suspecting. (And on another occasion, in 1938, there was an incident involving the *Dzhurma*: The thieves aboard got out of the hold and into the storage room, plundered it, and set it afire. The ship was very close to Japan when this occurred. Smoke was pouring from it, and the Japanese offered help, but the captain refused to accept it and *even refused to open the hatches.* When Japan had been left behind, the corpses of those suffocated by smoke were thrown overboard, and the half-burned, half-spoiled food aboard was sent on to camp as rations for the prisoners.)[6]

Short of Magadan the ship caravan got caught in the ice and not even the *Krasin* could help (it was too early for navigation, but they had been in a hurry to deliver laborers). On May 2 they disembarked the prisoners on the ice, some distance from the shore. The newly arrived prisoners got a look at the cheerless panorama of the Magadan of that time: dead hillocks, neither trees, nor bushes, nor birds, just a few wooden houses and the two-story building of "Dalstroi." Nonetheless, continuing to play out the farce of *correction,* in other words, pretending they had brought not simply bones with which to pave the gold-bearing Kolyma but temporarily isolated Soviet citizens who would yet return to creative life, they were greeted by the Dalstroi orchestra. The orchestra played marches and waltzes, and the tormented, half-dead people strung along the ice in a gray line, dragging their Moscow belongings with them (and this enormous prisoner transport consisted almost entirely of politicals who had hardly encountered a single thief yet) and carrying on their shoulders other half-dead people—arthritis sufferers or prisoners without legs. (And the legless, too, got prison terms.)

But here I note that I am again beginning to repeat myself. And this will be boring to write, and boring to read, because the

6. Decades have passed since then, but how many times Soviet citizens have met with misfortune on the world's oceans—and in circumstances where it seems that zeks were not being transported—yet because of that same *secretiveness* disguised as national pride they have refused help! Let the sharks devour us, so long as we don't have to accept your helping hand! *Secretiveness* —that is our cancer.

reader already knows everything that is going to happen ahead of time: The prisoners would be trucked hundreds of miles, and driven dozens of miles more on foot. And on arriving they would occupy new camp sites and immediately be sent out to work. And they would eat fish and flour, chased down with snow. And sleep in tents.

Yes, it was like that. But first the authorities would put them up in Magadan, also in Arctic tents, and would *commission* them there too—in other words, examine them naked to determine their fitness for labor from the condition of their buttocks (and all of them would turn out to be fit). In addition, of course, they would be taken to a bath and in the bath vestibule they would be ordered to leave their leather coats, their Romanov sheepskin coats, their woolen sweaters, their suits of fine wool, their felt cloaks, their leather boots, their felt boots (for, after all, these were no illiterate peasants this time, but the Party elite—editors of newspapers, directors of trusts and factories, responsible officials in the provincial Party committees, professors of political economy, and, by the beginning of the thirties, all of them understood what good merchandise was). "And who is going to guard them?" the newcomers asked skeptically. "Oh, come on now, who needs your things?" The bath personnel acted offended. "Go on in and don't worry." And they did go in. And the exit was through a different door, and after passing through it, they received black cotton breeches, field shirts, camp quilted jackets without pockets, and pigskin shoes. (Oh, this was no small thing! This was farewell to your former life—to your titles, your positions, and your arrogance!) "Where are our things?" they cried. "*Your* things you left at home!" some chief or other bellowed at them. "In camp nothing belongs to *you*. Here in camp we have *communism!* Forward march, leader!"

And if it was "communism," then what was there for them to object to? That is what they had dedicated their lives to.

■

And there are also prisoner transports in carts and simply *on foot*. Do you remember in Tolstoi's *Resurrection* how on a sunny day they drove them on foot from the prison to the railroad sta-

tion? Well, in Minusinsk in 194–, after the prisoners hadn't been taken into the fresh air for a whole year, they had forgotten how to walk, to breathe, to look at the light. And then they took them out, put them in formation, and drove them the *fifteen* miles to Abakan on foot. About a dozen of them died along the way. And no one is ever going to write a great novel about it, not even one chapter: if you live in a graveyard, you can't weep for everyone.

A prisoner transport on foot—that was the grandfather of prisoner transport by rail, of the Stolypin car, and of the red cattle cars too. In our time it is used less and less, and only where mechanical transportation is still impossible. Thus in one sector of Lake Ladoga, the prisoners were sent on foot from besieged Leningrad to the *red cars,* nicknamed "red *cows.*" They led the women together with the German POW's, and used bayonets to keep our men away from them so they couldn't take their bread. Those who fell by the wayside were immediately tossed up into a truck alive or dead, after their shoes were removed. And in the thirties, each day they sent off on foot from the Kotlas Transit Prison to Ust-Vym (about 185 miles) and sometimes to Chibyu (more than 300 miles) a transport of a hundred prisoners. Once in 1938 they sent off a women's prisoner transport the same way. These transports covered 15 miles a day. The convoy marched along with one or two dogs, and those who fell behind were urged on with gunstocks. True, the prisoners' possessions as well as the cooking pot and the food brought up the rear in carts, and this transport thus recalled the classic prisoner transports of the past century. There were also prisoner-transport huts —the ruined houses of liquidated kulaks, with windows broken and doors ripped off. The accounting office of the Kotlas Transit Prison had issued provisions to the transport based on a theoretical estimate of the time the journey would take, provided nothing went wrong on the way, without allowing for even one extra day. (The basic principle of all our accounting.) Whenever delays occurred en route, they had to stretch out the provisions, and fed the prisoners a mash of rye flour without salt and sometimes nothing at all. In this respect they departed from the classic model.

In 1940 Olenyev's prisoner transport, after disembarking from the barge, was herded on foot through the taiga (from Knyazh-

Pogost to Chibyu) without anything to eat at all. They drank swamp water and very quickly got dysentery. Some fell by the wayside out of weakness, and the dogs tore the clothes off those who had fallen. In Izhma they caught fish by using their trousers as nets and ate them alive. (And in a certain meadow they were told: Right here is where you are going to build a railroad from Kotlas to Vorkuta.)

And in other areas of our European North, prisoner transports on foot were standard until the time when, on those same routes and roadbeds built by those earlier zeks, the jolly red cattle cars rolled along carrying later prisoners.

A particular technique for prisoner transports on foot was worked out where such transports were frequent and abundant. When a transport is being taken through the taiga from Knyazh-Pogost to Veslyana, and suddenly some prisoner falls by the wayside and can go no farther, what is to be done with him? Just be reasonable and think about it: what? You aren't going to stop the whole transport. And you aren't going to leave one soldier behind for everyone who falls. There are many prisoners and only a few soldiers. And what does that mean? The soldier stays behind for a little while with the fallen prisoner and then hurries on to catch up with the rest—alone.

Regular transports on foot from Karabas to Spassk were retained for a long time. It was only twenty to twenty-five miles, but it had to be covered in one day, with one thousand prisoners in each transport, many of them very weak. It was expected in cases like these that many would simply either drop in their tracks or else fall behind through the indifference and apathy of dying men—you may shoot at them but they still can't go on. They are not afraid of death, but what about clubs, the indefatigable beating of the clubs wherever they hit? They are afraid of clubs, and they will keep going. This is a tested method—that's how it works. And so in these cases the transport column is surrounded not only by the ordinary chain of machine gunners at a distance of fifty yards, but also by an inner chain of soldiers armed only with clubs. Those who have fallen behind get beaten. (As, in fact, Comrade Stalin prophesied.) They are beaten again and again. And even when they have no strength at all with which to go farther, they keep going. And many do miraculously get

to the destination. They don't know that this is a *testing by clubs,* and that those who lie down and stay lying down and don't go on despite the clubs are picked up by carts following behind. That's organizational experience for you! (And one can ask: Why, then, didn't they take them all on carts in the first place? But where could enough carts be found? And horses? After all, we have tractors. What about the price of oats nowadays?) Such transports as these were still common in 1948–1950.

And in the twenties, transport on foot was one of the basic methods. I was a small boy, but I remember very well how they drove them down the streets of Rostov-on-the-Don without any qualms. And the famous order: ". . . will open fire without warning!" had a different ring at that time, again because of a difference in technology: after all, the convoy often had only sabers. They used to deliver orders like this: "One step out of line and the convoy guard *will shoot and slash!*" That had a very powerful sound: "shoot and slash!" You could imagine them cutting off your head from behind.

Yes, and even in February, 1936, they drove on foot through Nizhni Novgorod a transport of long-bearded old men from the other side of the Volga, in their homespun coats and in real lapty —bast sandals—wrapped around with onuchi—Russian peasant footcloths—"Old Russia disappearing." And all of a sudden, right across their path, came three automobiles, in one of which rode the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee, President of the Soviet Union, this is to say, Kalinin. The prisoner transport halted. Kalinin went on through. He wasn't interested.

Shut your eyes, reader. Do you hear the thundering of wheels? Those are the Stolypin cars rolling on and on. Those are the red cows rolling. Every minute of the day. And every day of the year. And you can hear the water gurgling—those are prisoners' barges moving on and on. And the motors of the Black Marias roar. They are arresting someone all the time, cramming him in somewhere, moving him about. And what is that hum you hear? The overcrowded cells of the transit prisons. And that cry? The complaints of those who have been plundered, raped, beaten to within an inch of their lives.

We have reviewed and considered all the methods of delivering prisoners, and we have found that they are all . . . *worse*. We have examined the transit prisons, but we have not found any that were good. And even the last human hope that there is something better ahead, that it will be better in camp, is a false hope.

In camp it will be . . . worse.

Chapter 4

■

From Island to Island

And zeks are also moved from island to island of the Archipelago simply in solitary skiffs. This is called *special convoy*. It is the most unconstrained mode of transport. It can hardly be distinguished from free travel. Only a few prisoners are delivered in this way. I, in my own career as a prisoner, made three such journeys.

The special convoy is assigned on orders from high officials. It should not be confused with the *special requisition,* which is also signed by someone high up. A special-requisition prisoner usually travels on the general prisoner transports, though he, too, meets up with some amazing interludes on his trip (which are all the more extraordinary in consequence). For example, Ans Bernshtein was traveling on a special requisition from the North to the lower Volga, to join an agricultural mission. He was exposed to all the overcrowded conditions and humiliations I have described, snarled at by dogs, surrounded by bayonets, threatened with "One step out of line . . ." And then suddenly he was unloaded at the small station at Zenzevatka and met by one single, calm, unarmed jailer. The jailer yawned: "All right, you'll spend the night at my house, and you can go out on the town as you like till morning. Tomorrow I'll take you to the camp." And Ans did go out. Can you understand what *going out on the town* means to a person whose term is ten years, who has already said good-bye to life countless times, who was in a Stolypin car that

very morning and will be in camp the next day? And he immediately went out to watch the chickens scratching around in the station master's garden and the peasant women getting ready to leave the station with their unsold butter and melons. He moved three, four, five steps to the side and no one shouted "Halt!" at him. With unbelieving fingers he touched the leaves of the acacias and almost wept.

And the special convoy is precisely that sort of miracle from beginning to end. You won't see the common prisoner transports this time. You don't have to keep your hands behind your back. You don't have to undress down to your skin, nor sit on the earth on your rear end, and there won't be any search at all. Your convoy guards approach you in a friendly way and even address you politely. They warn you, as a general precaution, that in case of any attempt to escape—We do, as usual, shoot. Our pistols are loaded and we have them in our pockets. However, let's go *simply*. Act natural. Don't let everyone see that you're a prisoner. (And I urge you to note how here, too, as always, the interests of the individual and the interests of the state coincide completely.)

My camp life was totally transformed the day I went out to line up forlornly in the carpenters' brigade, my fingers cramped (they had gotten stiff holding onto tools and wouldn't straighten out), and the work-assignment supervisor took me aside and with unexpected respect said to me: "Do you know that on orders of the Minister of Internal Affairs . . . ?"

I was stupefied. The line-up dispersed and the trusties in the camp compound surrounded me. Some of them said: "They are going to hang a new stretch on you." And others said: "To be released." But everyone agreed on one thing—that there was no escaping Minister of Internal Affairs Kruglov. And I, too, swayed between a new term and being released. I had quite forgotten that half a year before, some character had come to our camp and distributed Gulag registration cards. (After the war they had begun this registration in all the nearby camps, but it seems unlikely that it was ever completed.) The most important question on it was: "Trade or Profession." And the zeks would fill in the most precious Gulag trades to enhance their own value: "barber," "tailor," "storekeeper," "baker." As for me, I had

frowned and filled in "nuclear physicist." I had never been a nuclear physicist in my life, and what I knew of the field I had heard in the university before the war—just a little bit, the names of the atomic particles and their parameters. And I had decided to write down "nuclear physicist." This was in 1946. The atom bomb was desperately needed. But I didn't assign any importance to that Gulag registration card and, in fact, forgot about it.

There was a vague, unverified legend, unconfirmed by anybody, that you might nevertheless hear in camp: that somewhere in this Archipelago were tiny *paradise islands.* No one had seen them. No one had been there. Whoever had, kept silent about them and never let on. On those islands, they said, flowed rivers of milk and honey, and eggs and sour cream were the least of what they fed you; things were neat and clean, they said, and it was always warm, and the only work was mental work—and all of it super-supersecret.

And so it was that I got to those paradise islands myself (in convict lingo they are called "sharashkas") and spent half my sentence on them. It's to them I owe my survival, for I would never have lived out my whole term in the camps. And it's to them I owe the fact that I am writing this investigation, even though I have not allowed them any place in this book. (I have already written a novel about them.) And it was from one to another of those islands, from the first to the second, and from the second to the third, that I was transported on a special-convoy basis: two jailers and I.

If the souls of those who have died sometimes hover among us, see us, easily read in us our trivial concerns, and we fail to see them or guess at their incorporeal presence, then that is what a special-convoy trip is like.

You are submerged in the mass of *freedom,* and you push and shove with the others in the station waiting room. You absentmindedly examine announcements posted there, even though they can hardly have any relevance for you. You sit on the ancient passenger benches, and you hear strange and insignificant conversations: about some husband who beats up his wife or has left her; and some mother-in-law who, for some reason, does not get along with her daughter-in-law; how neighbors in communal apartments make personal use of the electric outlets in the corri-

dor and don't wipe their feet; and how someone is in someone else's way at the office; and how someone has been offered a good job but can't make up his mind to move—how can he move bag and baggage, is that so easy? You listen to all this, and the goose pimples of rejection run up and down your spine: to you the true measure of things in the Universe is so clear! The measure of all weaknesses and all passions! And these sinners aren't fated to perceive it. The only one there who is alive, truly alive, is incorporeal you, and all these others are simply mistaken in thinking themselves alive.

And an unbridgeable chasm divides you! You cannot cry out to them, nor weep over them, nor shake them by the shoulder: after all, you are a disembodied spirit, you are a ghost, and they are material bodies.

And how can you bring it home to them? By an inspiration? By a vision? A dream? Brothers! People! Why has life been given you? In the deep, deaf stillness of midnight, the doors of the death cells are being swung open—and great-souled people are being dragged out to be shot. On all the railroads of the country this very minute, right now, people who have just been fed salt herring are licking their dry lips with bitter tongues. They dream of the happiness of stretching out one's legs and of the relief one feels after going to the toilet. In Orotukan the earth thaws only in summer and only to the depth of three feet—and only then can they bury the bones of those who died during the winter. And you have the right to arrange your own life under the blue sky and the hot sun, to get a drink of water, to stretch, to travel wherever you like without a convoy. So what's this about unwiped feet? And what's this about a mother-in-law? What about the main thing in life, all its riddles? If you want, I'll spell it out for you right now. Do not pursue what is illusory—property and position: all that is gained at the expense of your nerves decade after decade, and is confiscated in one fell night. Live with a steady superiority over life—don't be afraid of misfortune, and do not yearn after happiness; it is, after all, all the same: the bitter doesn't last forever, and the sweet never fills the cup to overflowing. It is enough if you don't freeze in the cold and if thirst and hunger don't claw at your insides. If your back isn't broken, if your feet can walk, if both arms can bend, if both eyes see,

and if both ears hear, then whom should you envy? And why? Our envy of others devours us most of all. Rub your eyes and purify your heart—and prize above all else in the world those who love you and who wish you well. Do not hurt them or scold them, and never part from any of them in anger; after all, you simply do not know: it might be your last act before your arrest, and that will be how you are imprinted in their memory!

But the convoy guards stroke the black handles of the pistols in their pockets. And we sit there, three in a row, sober fellows, quiet friends.

I wipe my brow. I shut my eyes, and then I open them. And once again I see this dream: a crowd of people unaccompanied by guards. I remember clearly that I spent last night in a cell and will be in a cell again tomorrow. But here comes some kind of conductor to punch my ticket: "Your ticket!" "My friend there has it!"

The cars are full. (Well, "full" in free people's terms—no one is lying under the benches, and no one is sitting on the floor in the aisles.) I was told to behave naturally, and I have been behaving very naturally indeed: I noticed a seat beside a window in the next compartment, and got up and took it. And there were no empty seats for my guards in that compartment. They sat where they were and kept their loving eyes on me from there. In Perebory, the seat across the table from me was vacated, but before my guard could get to it and sit down, a moon-faced fellow in a sheepskin coat and a fur cap, with a plain but strong wooden suitcase, sat down there. I recognized his suitcase: it was camp work, "made in the Archipelago."

"Whew!" he puffs. There was very little light, but I could see he was red in the face and that he had had a hassle to get on the train. And he got out a bottle: "How about a beer, comrade?" I knew that my guards were close to a nervous breakdown in the next compartment: I was not allowed anything alcoholic. But still . . . I was supposed to conduct myself as naturally as possible. And so I said carelessly: "All right, why not?" (Beer! It's a whole poem! For three years I hadn't had even one swallow. And tomorrow in my cell I would brag: "I got beer!") The fellow poured it, and I drank it down with a shiver of pleasure. It was already dark. There was no electricity in the car. This was post-

war dislocation. One tiny candle end was burning in an ancient lantern at the door, one for four compartments: two in front and two behind. I talked amiably with the fellow even though we could hardly see each other. No matter how far forward my guard leaned, he couldn't hear a thing because of the clickety-clack of the wheels. In my pocket I had a postcard addressed to my home. And I was about to explain who I was to my simple friend across the table and ask him to drop the card in a mailbox. Judging by his suitcase he had been in stir himself. But he beat me to it: "You know, I just barely managed to get some leave. They haven't given me any time off for two years; it's a dog's branch of the service." "What kind?" "Don't you know? I'm an MVD man, an asmodeus, blue shoulder boards, haven't you ever seen them?" Hell! Why hadn't I guessed right off? Perebory was the center for Volgolag, and he had gotten his suitcase out of the zeks, they had made it for him for free. How all this had permeated our life! Two MVD men, two asmodei, weren't enough in two compartments. There had to be a third. And perhaps there was also a fourth concealed somewhere? And maybe they were in every compartment? And maybe someone else there was traveling by special convoy like me.

My fellow kept on whining and complaining of his fate. And at that point, I decided to enter a somewhat mystifying demurrer. "And what about the ones you're guarding, the ones who got ten years for nothing—is it any easier for them?" He immediately subsided and remained silent until morning: earlier, in the semi-darkness, he had noticed that I was wearing some kind of semi-military overcoat and field shirt. And he had thought I was simply a soldier boy, but now the devil only knew what I might be: Maybe I was a police agent? Maybe I was out to catch escapees? Why was I in this particular car? And he had criticized the camps there in my presence.

By this time the candle end in the lantern was floating but still burning. On the third baggage shelf some youth was talking in a pleasant voice about the war—the real war, the kind you don't read about in books: he had been with a unit of field engineers and was describing incidents that were true to life. And it was so pleasant to realize that unvarnished truth was, despite everything, pouring into someone's ears.

I could have told tales too. I would even have liked to. But no, I didn't really want to any more. Like a cow, the war had licked away four of my years. I no longer believed that it had all actually happened and I didn't want to remember it. Two years *here,* two years in the Archipelago, had dimmed in my mind all the roads of the front, all the comradeship of the front line, had totally darkened them.

One wedge knocks out another.

And after spending a few hours among *free people,* here is what I feel: My lips are mute; there is no place for me among them; my hands are tied here. I want free speech! I want to go back to my native land! I want to go home to the Archipelago!

In the morning I deliberately *forgot* my postcard on an upper shelf: after all, the conductor will get around to cleaning up the car; she will carry it to a mailbox—if she is a human being.

We emerge onto the square in front of the Northern Station in Moscow. Again my jailers are newcomers to Moscow, and don't know the city. We travel on streetcar "B," and I make the decisions for them. There is a mob at the streetcar stop in the middle of the square; everyone is on the way to work at this hour. One jailer climbs up to the streetcar motorman and shows him his MVD identity card. We are allowed to stand imposingly on the front platform for the whole trip, as if we were deputies of the Moscow Soviet, and we don't bother to get tickets. An old man isn't allowed to board there—he isn't an invalid and he has to board in the rear like the others.

We approach Novoslobodskaya and disembark—and for the first time I see Butyrki Prison from the outside, even though it's the fourth time I've been brought there and I can draw its interior plan without difficulty. Oof, what a grim, high wall stretches for two blocks there! The hearts of the Muscovites shiver when they see the steel maw of its gates slide open. But I leave the sidewalks of Moscow behind me without regret, and as I enter that tower of the gatehouse I feel I am returning home. I smile at the first courtyard and recognize the familiar main doors of carved wood. And it's nothing at all to me that they are now going to make me face the wall—and they already have—and ask me: "Last name? Given name and patronymic? Year of birth?"

My name? I am the Interstellar Wanderer! They have tightly bound my body, but my soul is beyond their power.

I know: after several hours of inevitable processing of my body—confinement in a box, search, issuing receipts, filling out the admissions card, after the roaster and the bath—I shall be taken to a cell with two domes, with a hanging arch in the middle (all the cells are like that), with two large windows and a long combination table and cupboard. And I shall be greeted by strangers who are certain to be intelligent, interesting, friendly people, and they will begin to tell me their stories, and I will begin to tell them mine, and by night we will not even feel like going off to sleep right away.

And on the bowls will be stamped (so we shouldn't make off with them on the prisoner transport) the mark "Bu-Tyur"—for *Bu*tyrskaya *Tyur*ma, Butyrki Prison. The "BuTyur" Health Resort, as we mocked it last time. A health resort, incidentally, very little known to the paunchy bigwigs who want so badly to lose weight. They drag their stomachs to Kislovodsk, and go out for long hikes on prescribed trails, do push-ups, and sweat for a whole month just to lose four to six pounds. And there in the "BuTyur" Health Resort, right near them, anyone of them could lose seventeen or eighteen pounds just like that, in one week, without doing any exercises at all.

This is a tried and true method. It has never failed.

■

One of the truths you learn in prison is that the world is small, very small indeed. True, the Gulag Archipelago, although it extended across the entire Soviet Union, had many fewer inhabitants than the Soviet Union as a whole. How many there actually were in the Archipelago one cannot know for certain. We can assume that *at any one time* there were not more than twelve million in the camps[1] (as some departed beneath the sod, the Machine kept bringing in replacements). And not more than half of them were politicals. Six million? Well, that's a small country, Sweden or Greece, and in such countries many people

1. According to the researches of the Social Democrats Nicolaevsky and Dallin, there were from fifteen to twenty million prisoners in the camps.

know one another. And quite naturally when you landed in any cell of any transit prison and listened and chatted, you'd be certain to discover you had acquaintances in common with some of your cellmates. (And so D., after having spent more than a year in solitary confinement, after Sukhanovka, after Ryumin's beatings and the hospital, could land in a Lubyanka cell and give his name, and then and there a bright chap named F. could greet him: "Aha, so now I know who you are!" "Where from?" D. shied away from him. "You are mistaken." "Certainly not. You are that very same American, Alexander D., whom the bourgeois press lied about, saying you had been kidnaped—and TASS denied it. I was free at the time and read about it.")

I love that moment when a newcomer is admitted to the cell for the first time (not a novice who has only recently been arrested and will inevitably be depressed and confused, but a veteran zek). And I myself love to enter a new cell (nonetheless, God grant I never have to do it again) with an unworried smile and an expansive gesture: "Hi, brothers!" I throw my bag on the bunks. "Well, so what's new this past year in Butyrki?"

We begin to get acquainted. Some fellow named Suvorov, a 58. At first glance there's nothing remarkable about him, but you probe and pry: at the Krasnoyarsk Transit Prison a certain Makhotkin was in his cell.

"Just a moment, wasn't he an Arctic aviator?"

"Yes. They named . . ."

" . . . an island after him in the Taimyr Gulf. And he's in prison for 58-10. So does that mean they let him go to Dudinka?"

"How do you know? Yes."

Wonderful! One more link in the biography of a man I don't know. I have never met him, and perhaps I never shall. But my efficient memory has filed away everything I know about him: Makhotkin got a whole "quarter"—twenty-five years—but the island named after him couldn't be renamed because it was on all the maps of the world (it wasn't a Gulag island). They had taken him on at the aviation sharashka in Bolshino and he was unhappy there: an aviator among engineers, and not allowed to fly. They split that sharashka in two, and Makhotkin got assigned to the Taganrog half, and it seemed as though all connection with him had been severed. In the other half of it, however, in Rybinsk,

I was told that he had asked to be allowed to fly in the Far North. And now I had just learned he had been given that permission. This was not information I needed, but I had remembered it all. And ten days later I turned up in the same Butyrki bath box (there are such lovely boxes in the Butyrki, with faucets and small washtubs so as not to tie up the big bath chambers) as a certain R. I didn't know this R. either, but it turned out he had been a patient in the Butyrki hospital for half a year and was about to leave for the Rybinsk sharashka. In another three days the prisoners in Rybinsk, too, a closed box where zeks are cut off from all ties with the outside world, would nevertheless learn that Makhotkin was in Dudinka, and they would also find out where I had been sent.

Now *this* is the prisoners' telegraph system: attentiveness, memory, chance meetings.

And this attractive man in horn-rimmed spectacles? He walked around the cell humming Schubert in a pleasant baritone.

> And youth again oppresses me,
> And the way to the grave is long.

"Tsarapkin, Sergei Romanovich."

"But look here, I know you very well indeed. You're a biologist? A nonreturnee? From Berlin?"

"How do you know?"

"But after all, it's a small world! In 1946 with Nikolai Vladimirovich Timofeyev-Ressovsky . . ."

Oh, what a cell that had been in 1946: The memories of it returned. It was perhaps the most brilliant cell in all my prison life. It was July. They had taken me from the camp to the Butyrki on those mysterious "instructions of the Minister of Internal Affairs." We arrived after lunch, but the prison was so overloaded that the reception processing took eleven hours, and it was not until 3 A.M. that, tired from the boxes, I was admitted to Cell 75. Lit by two bright electric bulbs below the two domes, the whole cell slept side by side, restless because of the stuffiness: the hot July air couldn't circulate through the windows blocked by the "muzzles." Sleepless flies kept buzzing, and the sleepers twitched when the flies lit on them. Some of the prisoners had put handkerchiefs over their faces to keep the light out of their eyes.

The latrine barrel smelled acrid—everything decayed more quickly in such heat. Eighty people were stuffed into a cell for twenty-five—and this was not the limit either. Prisoners lay tightly packed together on the bunks to left and right and also on the supplementary planks laid across the aisle, and everywhere feet were sticking out from under the bunks, and the traditional Butyrki table-cupboard was pushed back to the latrine barrel. That was where there was still a piece of unoccupied floor, and that was where I lay down. And thus it was that whoever got up to use the latrine barrel before morning had to step across me.

When the order "Get up!" was given, shouted through the swill trough in the door, everything started to stir: They began to take up the planks from across the aisles and push the table to the window. Prisoners came up to interview me—to find out whether I was a novice or a camp veteran. It turned out that two different waves had met in the cell: the ordinary wave of freshly sentenced prisoners being sent off to camp and a reverse wave of camp inmates who were all technical specialists—physicists, chemists, mathematicians, design engineers—all being sent to unknown destinations, to some sort of thriving scientific research institutes. (At this point I relaxed: the Minister was not going to *hang a new stretch* on me.) I was approached by a man who was middle-aged, broad-shouldered yet very skinny, with a slightly aquiline nose:

"Professor Timofeyev-Ressovsky, President of the Scientific and Technical Society of Cell 75. Our society assembles every day after the morning bread ration, next to the left window. Perhaps you could deliver a scientific report to us? What precisely might it be?"

Caught unaware, I stood before him in my long bedraggled overcoat and winter cap (those arrested in winter are foredoomed to go about in winter clothing during the summer too). My fingers had not yet straightened out that morning and were all scratched. What kind of scientific report could I give? And right then I remembered that in camp I had recently held in my hands for two nights the Smyth Report, the official report of the United States Defense Department on the first atom bomb, which had been brought in from outside. The book had been published that spring. Had anyone in the cell seen it? It was a useless question.

Of course no one had. And thus it was that fate played its joke, compelling me, in spite of everything, to stray into nuclear physics, the same field in which I had registered on the Gulag card.

After the rations were issued, the Scientific and Technical Society of Cell 75, consisting of ten or so people, assembled at the left window and I made my report and was accepted into the society. I had forgotten some things, and I could not fully comprehend others, and Timofeyev-Ressovsky, even though he had been in prison for a year and knew nothing of the atom bomb, was able on occasion to fill in the missing parts of my account. An empty cigarette pack was my blackboard, and I held an illegal fragment of pencil lead. Nikolai Vladimirovich took them away from me and sketched and interrupted, commenting with as much self-assurance as if he had been a physicist from the Los Alamos group itself.

He actually had worked with one of the first European cyclotrons, but for the purpose of irradiating fruit flies. He was a biologist, one of the most important geneticists of our time. He had already been in prison back when Zhebrak, not knowing that (or, perhaps, knowing it), had the courage to write in a Canadian magazine: "Russian biology is not responsible for Lysenko; Russian biology is Timofeyev-Ressovsky." (And during the destruction of Soviet biology in 1948 Zhebrak paid for this.) Schrödinger, in his small book *What Is Life?*, twice cited Timofeyev-Ressovsky, who had long since been imprisoned.

And there he was in front of us, and he was simply bursting with information concerning all possible sciences. He had that breadth of scope which scientists of later generations don't even want to have. (Or is it that the possibilities of encompassing knowledge have changed?) And even though at the moment he was so worn down by the starvation of the interrogation period that these exercises were very difficult for him. On his mother's side he was descended from impoverished Kaluga gentlefolk who had lived on the Ressa River, and on his father's side he was a collateral descendant of Stepan Razin, and that Cossack energy was very obvious in him—in his broad frame, in his basic soundness, in his determined struggle with his interrogator, and also in the fact that he suffered from hunger more than we did.

And his story was this: In 1922 the German scientist Vogt,

who had founded the Brain Institute in Moscow, had asked to have two talented graduate students sent abroad to work with him permanently. And that was how Timofeyev-Ressovsky and his friend Tsarapkin had been sent off on a foreign assignment with no time limit. And even though they did not have any ideological guidance there, they nonetheless achieved great things in science, and when in 1937 (!) they were instructed to return to their homeland, this seemed to them, since it meant interrupting their work, impossible. They could not abandon either the logical continuation of their own researches or their apparatus or their students. And, no doubt, they also couldn't do it because back in the Motherland they would have been compelled to pour shit publicly all over their fifteen years of work in Germany. And only that would have earned them the right to go on existing (and *would* it have earned it for them?). And so they became nonreturnees, remaining patriots nevertheless.

In 1945 the Soviet armies entered Buch (a northeast suburb of Berlin), and Timofeyev-Ressovsky and his entire institute joyously welcomed them: everything had worked out in the best possible way, and now he would not have to be separated from his institute! Soviet representatives came to inspect it and said: "Hmm! hmm! Put everything in packing cases, and we'll take it all to Moscow." "That's impossible," Timofeyev objected. "Everything will die on the way. The installations have taken years to set up." "Hmm!" The bigwigs acted astonished. And very shortly after that Timofeyev and Tsarapkin were arrested and taken off to Moscow. They were naïve. They had thought that the institute would not be able to operate without them. Well, even if it didn't operate, the general line of the Party must triumph! In the Big Lubyanka it was very easily proven to the arrested individuals that they were traitors of the Motherland (or to it?), and they were sentenced to ten years, and now the President of the Scientific and Technical Society of Cell 75 took heart from the thought that he hadn't made any errors.

In the Butyrki cells, the arched metal frames supporting the bunks were very, very low. Even the prison administration had never thought of having prisoners sleep under them. Therefore, you first tossed your neighbor your coat so that he could spread it out for you under there, and then you lay face down in the aisle

and crawled your way in. Prisoners walked through the aisle, the floor underneath the bunks was swept maybe once a month, and you could wash your hands only during the evening trip to the toilet, and even then without soap—and it was thus impossible to say that you could perceive your body as a Divine vessel. But I was happy! There, on the asphalt floor, under the bunks, in a dog's den, with dust and crumbs from the bunks falling in our eyes, I was absolutely happy, without any qualifications. Epicurus spoke truly: Even the absence of variety can be sensed as satisfaction when a variety of dissatisfactions has preceded it. After camp, which had already seemed endless, and after a ten-hour workday, after cold, rain, and aching back, oh, what happiness it was to lie there for whole days on end, to sleep, and nevertheless receive a pound and a half of bread and two hot meals a day—made from cattle feed, or from dolphin's flesh. In a word, the "BuTyur" Health Resort.

To sleep was so important! To lie there on one's belly, to cover one's back and just to sleep. When you were asleep, you didn't spend your strength nor torment your heart—and meanwhile your sentence was passing, passing. When our life crackles and sparks like a torch, we curse the necessity of spending eight hours uselessly in sleep. When we have been deprived of everything, when we have been deprived of hope, then bless you, fourteen hours of sleep!

But they kept me in that cell two months, and I slept enough to make up for the past year and the year ahead, and during that time I moved forward under the bunks to the window and then all the way back to the latrine barrel, but on the bunks this time, and then on the bunks I moved to the archway. I was sleeping very little by this time—I was gulping down the elixir of life and enjoying myself. In the morning the Scientific and Technical Society, then chess, books (oh, those itinerant books, there were only three or four for eight or ten people, and there was always a waiting list for them), then a twenty-minute walk outdoors—a major chord! We never refused our walk even when it was raining heavily. And the main thing was people, people, people! Nikolai Andreyevich Semyonov, one of the creators of the Dnieper Hydroelectric Dam and Power Station. His POW friend, the engineer F. F. Karpov. Witty, caustic Viktor Kagan, a physicist. The

musician and conservatory student Volodya Klempner, a composer. A woodcutter and hunter from the Vyatka forests, as profound as a forest lake. An Orthodox preacher from Europe, Yevgeny Ivanovich Divnich. He did not confine himself to theology, but condemned Marxism, declaring that no one in Europe had taken it seriously for a long while—and I defended it, because after all I was a Marxist. And even a year ago I would have confidently demolished him with quotations; how disparagingly I would have mocked him! But my first year as a prisoner had left its mark inside me—and just when had that happened? I hadn't noticed: there had been so many new events, sights, meanings, that I could no longer say: "They don't exist! That's a bourgeois lie!" And now I had to admit: "Yes, they do exist." And right at that point my whole line of reasoning began to weaken, and so they could beat me in our arguments without half-trying.

And again the POW's kept coming and coming and coming—this was the second year of the wave of them that kept unceasingly coming from Europe. And once more there were Russian émigrés —from Europe, from Manchuria. One went about among the émigrés seeking news of acquaintances by first asking what country they had come from, and did they know so and so? Yes, of course, they did. (And that is how I learned of the execution of Colonel Yasevich.)

And the old German, that portly German, now emaciated and ill, whom I had once upon a time back in East Prussia (was it two hundred years ago?) forced to carry my suitcase. Oh, how small the world really is! Strange fate that brought us together again! The old man smiled at me. He recognized me too, and even seemed pleased by our meeting. He had forgiven me. He had been sentenced to ten years, but he certainly didn't have anywhere near that long to live. And there was another German there too—lanky and young, but unresponsive—perhaps because he didn't know one word of Russian. You wouldn't even take him for a German right off the bat: the thieves had torn off everything German he had on and given him a faded old Soviet field shirt in exchange. He was a famous German air ace. His first campaign had been in the war between Bolivia and Paraguay, his second in Spain, his third Poland, his fourth over England, his fifth Cyprus,

his sixth the Soviet Union. Since he was an ace he could certainly not have avoided shooting down women and children from the air! That made him a war criminal and he got a prison sentence and a "muzzle" of five additional years. And, of course, there had to be one right-thinking person (like Prosecutor Kretov) in the cell: "They were right to imprison all you counterrevolutionary bastards! History will grind up your bones for fertilizer!" "You're going to be fertilizer yourself, you dog!" they shouted back. "No, they will reconsider my case. I am innocent!" And the whole cell howled and seethed. And a gray-haired Russian-language teacher stood up on the bunks, barefoot, and wrung his hands like a latter-day Jesus Christ: "Children of mine, make peace with one another! My children!" And they howled at him too: "Your children are in the Bryansk forests! We are nobody's children! All we are is the sons of Gulag."

After dinner and the evening trip to the toilet, night cloaked the window "muzzles" and the nagging electric lights below the ceiling lit up. Day divided the prisoners and night drew them closer together. There were no quarrels in the evening: lectures and concerts were given. And in this, too, Timofeyev-Ressovsky shone: he spent entire evenings on Italy, Denmark, Norway, Sweden. The émigrés spoke about the Balkans, about France. Someone delivered a lecture on Le Corbusier. Someone else delivered one on the habits of bees. Someone else on Gogol. This was when we smoked our lungs full. Smoke filled up the cell and hovered in the air like a fog, and there was no draft to pull it out the window because of the "muzzles." Kostya Kiula, twin to me in age, round-faced, blue-eyed, amusingly awkward, stepped up to the table and recited to us the verses he had composed in prison.[2] His voice broke with emotion. His verses were entitled, "My First Food Parcel," "To My Wife," "To My Son." When in prison you strain to get by ear verses written in prison, you don't waste a single thought on whether the author's use of syllabic stress is faulty and whether his lines end in assonances or full rhymes. These verses are the blood *of your own heart,* the tears *of your own wife.* The cell wept.

In that cell I myself set out to write verses about prison. And

2. Kostya Kiula doesn't respond, he's disappeared. I am afraid he is not among the living.

it was there that I recited the verses of Yesenin, who had almost but not quite been on the forbidden list before the war. And young Bubnov, a POW, and before that, apparently, a student who had not completed his studies, worshipfully gazed at those reciting, his face aglow. He was not a technical specialist and he hadn't come from camp, but was on his way there, and because of the purity and forthrightness of his character he would in all likelihood die there. People like him don't survive there. And for him and for others—their fatal descent braked for the moment —the evenings in Cell 75 were a sudden revelation of that beautiful world which exists and will continue to exist but which their own hard fate hadn't given them one little year of, not even one little year of their young lives.

The swill trough dropped down and the turnkey's mug barked at us: "Bed." No, even before the war, when I was studying at two higher educational institutions at the same time and earning my way by tutoring, and striving *to write* too, even then I had not experienced such full, such heart-rending, such completely filled days, as I did in Cell 75 that summer.

"But listen," I said to Tsarapkin, "I've heard since then from someone called Deul, a sixteen-year-old boy who got a *fiver* (not on a school report card) for 'anti-Soviet' propaganda. . . ."

"What, do you know him too? He was on our prisoner transport to Karaganda. . . ."

". . . I heard," I continued, "that you were given work as a laboratory assistant doing medical analyses and that Timofeyev-Ressovsky was constantly being sent out on *general-assignment work*. . . ."

"Yes, and he grew very weak. He was half-dead when they brought him from the Stolypin car here to the Butyrki. And he is in a hospital bed here right now, and the Fourth Special Department[3] is issuing him cream and even wine, but it's hard to say whether he will ever get back on his feet again."

"Did the Fourth Special Department summon you?"

"Yes. They asked us whether we considered it might still be possible after six months of Karaganda to start setting up our institute here, in the Fatherland."

3. The task of the Fourth Special Department of the MVD was to solve scientific problems, using prisoners.

"And you, of course, agreed enthusiastically."

"Most certainly! After all, we have come to understand our mistakes. And besides, all the equipment wrenched from its original place and put into packing cases got here even without us."

"What dedication to science on the part of the MVD! May I ask for a little more Schubert?"

And Tsarapkin sang softly, staring sadly at the window (his spectacles reflecting both their dark "muzzles" and their light upper sections):

Vom Abendrot zum Morgenlicht
ward mancher Kopf zum Greise.
Wer glaubt es? Meiner ward es nicht
auf dieser ganzen Reise.

■

Tolstoi's dream has come true: Prisoners are no longer compelled to attend pernicious religious services. The prison churches have been shut down. True, their buildings remain, but they have been successfully adapted to enlarge the prisons themselves. Two thousand additional prisoners have thereby been housed in the Butyrki church—and in the course of a year, estimating an average turnover of two weeks, another fifty thousand will pass through the cells in what was once the church.

On arriving at the Butyrki for the fourth or fifth time, hurrying confidently to my assigned cell, through the courtyard surrounded by prison buildings, and even outstripping the jailer by a shoulder (like a horse that hurries, without the urging of whip or reins, home to where the oats are waiting), I sometimes even forgot to glance at the square church rising into an octagon. It stood apart in the middle of the courtyard quadrangle. Its "muzzles" were not machine-made of glass reinforced with iron rods as they were in the main section of the prison. They were rotten, unplaned gray boards, pure and simple—and they indicated the building's second-rank priority. What they maintained there was a kind of intra-Butyrki transit prison, so to speak, for recently sentenced prisoners.

And at one time, in 1945, I had experienced it as a big, important step when they led us into the church after our OSO

sentencing (and that was the right time to do it too!—it was a good time for prayer!), took us up to the second floor (and the third floor was also partitioned off), and from the octagonal vestibule distributed us among different cells. Mine was the southeast cell.

This was a large square cell in which, at the time, two hundred prisoners were confined. They were sleeping, as they did everywhere else there, on the bunks (and they were one-story bunks), under the bunks, and just simply on the tile floor, out in the aisles. Not only were the "muzzles" on the windows second-rate; everything else, too, was in a style appropriate not to true sons of Butyrki but to its stepsons. No books, no chess sets, no checkers were distributed to this swarming mass, and the dented aluminum bowls and beat-up wooden spoons were collected and removed from one mealtime to another for fear that in the rush they might get carried off on prisoner transports. They were even stingy with mugs for the stepsons. They washed the bowls after the gruel, and then the prisoners had to lap up their tea slops out of them. The absence of one's own dishes was particularly acute for those who experienced the mixed blessing of receiving a parcel from their families (despite their meager means, relatives made a special effort to provide parcels in those last days before the prisoner transports left). The families had had no prison education themselves, and they never got any good advice in the prison reception office either. And therefore they didn't send plastic dishes, the one and only kind prisoners were allowed to have, but glass or metal ones instead. All these honeys, jams, condensed milks were pitilessly poured and scraped out of their cans through the swill trough in the cell door into whatever the prisoner had, and in the church cells he had nothing at all, which meant that he simply got it in the palms of his hands, in his mouth, in his handkerchief, in the flaps of his coat—which was quite normal in Gulag terms, but not in the center of Moscow! And at the same time the jailer kept hurrying him as if he were late for his train. (The jailer hurried him because he was counting on licking out whatever was left in the jars.) Everything was temporary in the church cells, without that illusion of permanency which existed in the interrogation cells and in the cells where prisoners awaited sentencing. Ground meat, a semiprocessed

product partially prepared for Gulag, the prisoners were unavoidably here those few days until a bit of space had been cleared for them at Krasnaya Presnya. They had just one special privilege here: three times a day they were allowed to go for their gruel themselves (no grits were given out here, but the gruel was served three times a day, and this was a merciful thing because it was more frequent, hotter, and stuck to the ribs better). This special privilege was allowed because there were no elevators in the church—as there were in the rest of the prison. And the jailers had no wish to exert themselves. The big heavy kettles had to be carried from a long way off, across the yard, and then up a steep flight of stairs. It was hard work, and the prisoners had very little strength for it, but they went willingly—just to get out into the green yard one more time and hear the birds singing.

The church cells had their own air: it held a fluttering presentiment of the drafts of future transit prisons, of the winds of the Arctic camps. In the church cells you celebrated the ritual of getting adjusted—to the fact that your sentence had been handed down and that it wasn't in the least a joke; to the fact that no matter how cruel the new era of your life might be, your mind must nevertheless digest and accept it. And you arrived at that with great difficulty.

And you had no permanent cellmates here as you did in the interrogation cells—which made the latter something like a family. Day and night, people were brought in and taken away singly and by tens, and as a result the prisoners kept moving ahead along the floor and along the bunks, and it was rare to lie next to any one neighbor for more than two nights. Once you met an interesting person there you had to question him immediately, because otherwise you would miss out for good and all.

And that is how I missed out on the automobile mechanic Medvedev. When I began to talk to him, I remembered that his name had been mentioned by the Emperor Mikhail. Yes, he had indeed been implicated in the same case as Mikhail, because he had been one of the first to read the "Manifesto to the Russian People"—and had failed to write a denunciation. Medvedev had been given an unforgivably, shamefully light sentence—three years. And under Article 58, too, for which even five years was considered a juvenile sentence. They had evidently decided the

Emperor was really insane, and had been easy on the rest of them because of *class* considerations. But I had hardly pulled myself together to ask how Medvedev regarded all this than they took him off "with his things." Certain circumstances led us to conclude that he had been taken off to be released. And this confirmed those first rumors of the Stalinist amnesty which reached our ears that summer, *the amnesty for no one,* an amnesty after which everything was just as crowded as before—even under the bunks.

They took my neighbor, an elderly Schutzbündler, off to a prisoner transport. (Here in the land of the world proletariat, all those Schutzbündlers who had been suffocating in conservative Austria had been *roasted* with "tenners," and on the islands of the Archipelago they met their end.) And there was a swarthy little fellow with coal-black hair and feminine-looking eyes like dark cherries, but with a broad, larger than usual nose that spoiled his whole face, turning it into a caricature. For a day he and I lay next to each other in silence, and on the second day he found occasion to ask me: "What do you think I am?" He spoke Russian correctly and fluently, but with an accent. I hesitated: there seemed to be something of Transcaucasia in him, Armenian presumably. He smiled: "I used to pass myself off very easily as a Georgian. My name was Yasha. Everyone laughed at me. I collected trade-union dues." I looked him over. His was truly a comical figure: a half-pint, his face out of proportion, asymmetrical, his smile amiable. And then suddenly he tensed up, his features sharpened, his eyes narrowed and cut me like the stroke of a black saber.

"I am an intelligence officer of the Rumanian General Staff! Lieutenant Vladimirescu!"

I started—this was real dynamite. I had met a couple of hundred fabricated spies, and I had never thought I might meet up with a real one. I thought they didn't exist.

According to his story, he was of an aristocratic family. From the age of three he had been destined to serve on the General Staff. At six he had entered the intelligence service school. Growing up, he had picked his own field of future activity—the Soviet Union, taking into account that here in Russia the most relentless counterintelligence service in the world existed and that it was

particularly difficult to work here because everyone suspected everyone else. And, he now concluded, he had worked here not at all badly. He had spent several prewar years in Nikolayev and, it appears, had arranged for the Rumanian armies to capture a shipyard intact. Subsequently he had been at the Stalingrad Tractor Factory, and after that at the Urals Heavy Machinery Factory. In the course of collecting trade-union dues he had entered the office of the chief of a major division of the plant, had shut the door behind him, and his idiotic smile had promptly left his face, and that saber-sharp cutting expression had appeared: "Ponomaryev! [And Ponomaryev was using an altogether different name at the Urals Heavy Machinery Factory.] We have been keeping track of you from Stalingrad on. You left your job there. [He had been some kind of bigwig at the Stalingrad Tractor Factory.] And you have set yourself up here under an assumed name. You can choose—to be shot by your own people or to work with us." Ponomaryev chose to work with them, and that indeed was very much in the style of those supersuccessful pigs. The lieutenant supervised his work until he himself was transferred to the jurisdiction of the German intelligence officer resident in Moscow, who sent him to Podolsk *to work at his specialty*. As Vladimirescu explained to me, intelligence officers and saboteurs are given an all-round training, but each of them has his own *narrow* area of specialization. And Vladimirescu's special field was cutting the main cord of a parachute on the inside. In Podolsk he was met at the parachute warehouse by the chief of the warehouse guard (who was it? what kind of person was he?), who at night let Vladimirescu into the warehouse for eight hours. Climbing up to the piles of parachutes on his ladder and managing not to disturb the piles, Vladimirescu pulled out the braided main support-cord and, with special scissors, cut four-fifths of the way through it, leaving one-fifth intact, so that it would break in the air. Vladimirescu had studied many long years in preparation for this one night. And now, working feverishly, in the course of eight hours he ruined, according to his account, upwards of two thousand parachutes (fifteen seconds per parachute?). "I destroyed a whole Soviet parachute division!" His cherrylike eyes sparkled with malice.

When he was arrested, he refused to give any testimony for

eight whole months—imprisoned in the Butyrki, he uttered not one word. "And didn't they torture you?" "No!" His lips twitched as though to indicate he didn't even consider such a thing possible in the case of a non-Soviet citizen. (Beat your own people so foreigners will be more afraid of you! But a real spy's a gold mine! After all, we may have to use him for an exchange.) The day came when they showed him the newspapers: Rumania had capitulated; come on, now, testify. He continued to keep silent: the newspapers could have been forgeries. They showed him an order of the Rumanian General Staff: under the conditions of the armistice the General Staff ordered all its intelligence agents to cease operations and surrender. He continued to keep silent. (The order could have been a forgery.) Finally he was confronted with his immediate superior on the General Staff, who ordered him to disclose his information and surrender. At this point Vladimirescu coldbloodedly gave his testimony, and now, in the slow passing of the cell day, it was no longer of any importance and he told me some of it too. They had not even tried him! They had not even given him a sentence! (After all, he wasn't one of our own! "I am a career man—and will remain one until I die. And they won't waste me.")

"But you are revealing yourself to me," I pointed out. "I might very well remember your face. Just imagine our meeting someday in public."

"If I am convinced that you haven't recognized me, you will remain alive. If you recognize me, I will kill you, or else force you to work for us."

He had not the slightest desire to spoil his relationship with his cell neighbor. He said this very simply, with total conviction. I was really convinced that he wouldn't hesitate for a moment to gun someone down or cut their throat.

In this whole long prisoners' chronicle, we will not again meet such a hero. It was the only encounter of the sort I ever had in my eleven years of prison, camp, and exile, and others didn't even have one. And our mass-circulation comics try to dupe young people into believing that these are the only people the *Organs* catch.

It was enough to look around that church cell to grasp that it was youth itself the Organs were catching in the first place. The

war had ended, and we could allow ourselves the luxury of arresting everyone who had been singled out: they were no longer needed as soldiers. They said that in 1944 and 1945 a so-called "Democratic Party" had passed through the cells of the Small (Moscow Province) Lubyanka. According to rumor, it had consisted of half a hundred boys, had its own statutes and its membership cards. The eldest of them was a pupil in the tenth grade of a Moscow school, and he was its "general secretary." Students were also glimpsed fleetingly in the prisons during the last year of the war. I met some here and there. I was presumably not old myself, but they at any rate were younger.

How imperceptibly all that crept up on us! While we—I, my codefendant, and others of our age—had been fighting for four years at the front, a whole new generation had grown up here in the rear. And had it been very long since we ourselves had tramped the parquet floors of the university corridors, considering ourselves the youngest and most intelligent in the whole country and, for that matter, on earth? And then suddenly pale youths crossed the tile floors of the prison cells to approach us haughtily, and we learned with astonishment that we were no longer the youngest and most intelligent—they were. But I didn't take offense at this; at that point I was already happy to move over a bit to make room. I knew so very well their passion for arguing with everyone, for finding out everything, I understood their pride in having chosen a worthy lot and in not regretting it. It gave me gooseflesh to hear the rustle of the prison halos hovering over those self-enamored and intelligent little faces.

One month earlier, in another Butyrki cell, a semihospital cell, I had just stepped into the aisle and had still not seen any empty place for myself—when, approaching in a way that hinted at a verbal dispute, even at an entreaty to enter into one, came a pale, yellowish youth, with a Jewish tenderness of face, wrapped, despite the summer, in a threadbare soldier's overcoat shot full of holes: he was chilled. His name was Boris Gammerov. He began to question me; the conversation rolled along: on one hand, our biographies, on the other, politics. I don't remember why, but I recalled one of the prayers of the late President Roosevelt, which had been published in our newspapers, and I expressed what seemed to me a self-evident evaluation of it:

"Well, that's hypocrisy, of course."

And suddenly the young man's yellowish brows trembled, his pale lips pursed, he seemed to draw himself up, and he asked me: "Why? Why do you not admit the possibility that a political leader might sincerely believe in God?"

And that is all that was said! But what a direction the attack *had* come from! To hear such words from someone born in 1923? I could have replied to him very firmly, but prison had already undermined my certainty, and the principal thing was that some kind of clean, pure feeling does live within us, existing apart from all our convictions, and right then it dawned upon me that I had not spoken out of conviction but because the idea had been implanted in me from outside. And because of this I was unable to reply to him, and I merely asked him: "Do you believe in God?"

"Of course," he answered tranquilly.

Of course? Of course . . . Yes, yes. The Komsomols were flying ahead of the flock—everywhere, but so far only the NKGB had noticed.

Notwithstanding his youth, Borya Gammerov had not only fought as a sergeant in an antitank unit with those antitank 45's the soldiers had christened "Farewell, Motherland!" He had also been wounded in the lungs and the wound had not yet healed, and because of this TB had set in. Gammerov was given a medical discharge from the army and enrolled in the biology department of Moscow University. And thus two strands intertwined in him: one from his life as a soldier and the other from the by no means foolish and by no means dead students' life at war's end. A circle formed of those who thought and reasoned about the future (even though no one had given them any instructions to do so), and the experienced eye of the Organs singled out three of them and pulled them in. (In 1937, Gammerov's father had been killed in prison or shot, and his son was hurrying along the same path. During the interrogation he had read several of his own verses to the interrogator *with feeling*. And I deeply regret that I have not managed to remember even one of them, and there is nowhere to seek them out today. Otherwise I would have cited them here.)

For a number of months after that my path crossed those of all three codefendants: right there in a Butyrki cell I met Vyacheslav D.—and there is always someone like him when young people

are arrested: he had taken an *iron stand* within the group, but he quickly broke down under interrogation. He got less than any of the others—five years—and it looked as though he were secretly counting a good deal on his influential papa to get him out.

And then in the Butyrki church I encountered Georgi Ingal, the eldest of the three. Despite his youth, he was already a candidate-member of the Union of Soviet Writers. He had a very bold pen. His style was one of strong contrasts. If he had been willing to make his peace politically, vivid and untrodden literary paths would have opened up before him. He had already nearly finished a novel about Debussy. But his early success had not emasculated him, and at the funeral of his teacher, Yuri Tynyanov, he had made a speech declaring that Tynyanov had been persecuted—and by this means had assured himself of an eight-year term.

And right then Gammerov caught up with us, and, while waiting to go to Krasnaya Presnya, I had to face up to their united point of view. This confrontation was not easy for me. At the time I was committed to that world outlook which is incapable of admitting any new fact or evaluating any new opinion before a label has been found for it from the already available stock: be it the "hesitant duplicity of the petty bourgoisie," or the "militant nihilism of the déclassé intelligentsia." I don't recall that Ingal and Gammerov attacked Marx in my presence, but I do remember how they attacked Lev Tolstoi, and from what direction the attack was launched! Tolstoi rejected the church? But he failed to take into account its mystical and its organizing role. He rejected the teachings of the Bible? But for the most part modern science was not in conflict with the Bible, not even with its opening lines about the creation of the world. He rejected the state? But without the state there would be chaos. He preached the combining of mental and physical work in one individual's life? But that was a senseless leveling of capabilities and talents. And, finally, as we see from Stalin's violence, an historical personage can be omnipotent, yet Tolstoi scoffed at the very idea.[4]

4. In my preprison and prison years I, too, had long ago come to the conclusion that Stalin had set the course of the Soviet state in a fateful direction. But then Stalin died quietly—and did the ship of state change course very noticeably? The personal, individual imprint he left on events consisted of dismal stupidity, petty tyranny, self-glorification. And in all the rest he followed the beaten path exactly as it had been signposted, step by step.

The boys read me their own verses and demanded mine in exchange, and I as yet had none. They read Pasternak particularly, whom they praised to the skies. I had once read "My Sister Life" and hadn't liked it, considering it precious, abstruse, and very, very far from ordinary human paths. But they recited to me Lieutenant Shmidt's last speech at his trial, and it touched me deeply because it applied so to us:

> For thirty years I have nurtured
> My love for my native land,
> And I shall neither expect
> Nor miss your leniency.

Gammerov and Ingal were just as shiningly attuned as that: We do not need your leniency! We are not languishing from *imprisonment;* we are proud of it. (But who is really capable of not languishing? After a few months Ingal's young wife renounced and abandoned him. Gammerov, because of his revolutionary inclinations, did not even have a sweetheart yet.) Was it not here, in these prison cells, that the great truth dawned? The cell was constricted, but wasn't *freedom* even more constricted? Was it not our own people, tormented and deceived, that lay beside us there under the bunks and in the aisles?

> Not to arise with my whole land
> Would have been harder still,
> And for the path that I have trod
> I have no qualms at all.

The young people imprisoned in these cells under the political articles of the Code were never the average young people of the nation, but were always separated from them by a wide gap. In those years most of our young people still faced a future of "disintegrating," of becoming disillusioned, indifferent, falling in love with an easy life—and then, perhaps, beginning all over again the bitter climb from that cozy little valley up to a new peak—possibly after another twenty years? But the young prisoners of 1945, sentenced under 58-10, had leaped that whole future chasm of indifference in one jump—and bore their heads boldly erect under the ax.

In the Butyrki church, the Moscow students, already sentenced,

cut off and estranged from everything, wrote a song, and before twilight sang it in their uncertain voices:

Three times a day we go for gruel,
The evenings we pass in song,
With a contraband prison needle
We sew ourselves *bags* for the road.

We don't care about ourselves any more,
We signed—just to be quicker!
And when will we ever return here again
From the distant Siberian camps?

Good Lord, how could we have missed the main point of the whole thing? While we had been plowing through the mud out there on the bridgeheads, while we had been cowering in shell holes and pushing binocular periscopes above the bushes, back home a new generation had grown up and gotten moving. But hadn't it started moving in *another* direction? In a direction we wouldn't have been able and wouldn't have dared to move in? They weren't brought up the way we were.

Our generation would return—having turned in its weapons, jingling its heroes' medals, proudly telling its combat stories. And our younger brothers would only look at us contemptuously: Oh, you stupid dolts!

END OF PART II

Translator's Notes

These *translator's notes* are not intended to overlap the extensive explanatory and reference material contained in the author's own notes in the text and in the glossary which follows. They attempt to give that minimum of factual material about this book and the whole work of which it is a part which will enable the reader better to put it in perspective and understand what it is, and also to deal with several areas of special Russian terminology.

The *glossary* which follows these notes can be very useful. It gives in alphabetical order capsule identification of persons, institutions and their acronyms, political movements, and events mentioned in the text.

The *title* of the book in Russian—*Arkhipelag GULag*—has a resonance resulting from a rhyme which cannot be rendered in English.

The *image* evoked by this title is that of one far-flung "country" with millions of "natives," consisting of an *archipelago* of islands, some as tiny as a detention cell in a railway station and others as vast as a large Western European country, contained within another country—the U.S.S.R. This archipelago is made up of the enormous network of penal institutions and all the rest of the web of machinery for police oppression and terror imposed throughout the author's period of reference on all Soviet life. Gulag is the acronym for the Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps which supervised the larger part of this system.

The author's decision to publish this work was triggered by a tragedy of August, 1973: A Leningrad woman to whom the author had entrusted a portion of his manuscript for safekeeping broke down after 120 sleepless hours of intensive questioning by Soviet Security officers and revealed where she had hidden it—enabling them to seize it. Thereupon, in her desperation and depression, she committed suicide. It is to this event that the author refers in the statement that precedes the text: "Now that State Security has seized the book anyway, I have no alternative but to publish it immediately."

This present English-language edition of Parts I and II of *The Gulag Archipelago* differs very slightly, as a result of author's corrections and other corrections, from the Russian-language first edition of these parts which was published by the YMCA-Press in Paris in late December, 1973.

The Gulag Archipelago is a sweeping, panoramic work which consists in all of seven parts divided into three volumes—of which this present book, the first volume, contains two parts, representing about *one-third* of the whole.

One of the important aspects of Solzhenitsyn as a Russian literary figure is his contribution to the revival and expansion of the Russian literary language through introducing readers in his own country (and abroad) to the language, terminology, and slang of camps, prisons, the police, and the underworld. Millions of Soviet citizens became fully familiar with a whole new vocabulary through imprisonment. But this vocabulary did not find its way into Russian literature until Solzhenitsyn put it there—to the bewilderment of some of the uninitiated.

In this category there are terms in this book which require explanation.

Soviet Security services personnel, for example, are referred to in a variety of special epithets, some of them carrying overtones of contempt. Most of these have been manufactured from the various initials, at one time and another, of the basic Soviet secret police organization:

The oldest of these terms is, of course, "Chekíst"—pronounced "Che-keest," with the accent on the last syllable—from "Cheká." Though the name "Cheka" was replaced more than half a century ago, this label for Soviet Security personnel is still used—and is much beloved by the personnel of the *Organs* themselves.

"Gaybíst," which is pronounced "gay-beest," with the accent on the last syllable, is derived from the letters "g" and "b" standing for State Security.

Likewise "Gaybéshnik"—pronounced "gay-besh-neek," with the accent on the second syllable.

"Emvaydéshnik"—pronounced as it is spelled here, with the accent on the third syllable—is derived similarly from the Russian pronunciation of the letters "M" "V" "D"—for Ministry of Internal Affairs.

"Gaypayóoshnik"—accent also on the third syllable—comes from "G" "P" "U" or "Gaypayóo."

"Osobíst"—pronounced "oh-so-beest," with accent on the last syllable—is an officer of the Special Branch, representing State Security, usually in a military unit—the "*Osóby* Otdél."

All these terms have their pungent flavor, which comes through even to the English-speaking reader—and they have therefore often been used as is in the text of this translation.

In the Gulag world there was one particular type of police official who had special significance. This was the "operupolnomóchenny"—"óper" for short. Literally rendered, this title means "operations plenipotentiary"—the operations being Security operations, often in a forced-labor camp, where he had enormous power deriving from the fact that he represented State Security in an institution under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. His nickname among the prisoners was "Kum," which can be translated approximately as "godfather" or "father confessor." He was in charge of all camp stool pigeons and he had responsibility for the political supervision of all the prisoners. Throughout this work his title has been translated as "Security operations officer" or more usually just "Security officer," or "Security chief."

The Russian thieves are not just plain ordinary thieves, but constitute a whole underworld subculture which gets much attention and is well described in this book. The Russian thieves are "vóry"—meaning thieves. They are also the "blatnýe" (plural); "blatnói" is the masculine singular form and also the adjective, describing a thing or person attached to the underworld or to the *law* or companionship of thieves.

The Russian thieves are also the "blatarí" and the "úrki." They are also "tsvetnýe"—in other words "colored." And a

person "polutsvetnói"—"half-colored" or "mulatto"—is a nonthief who has begun to take up the ways of the thieves.

By and large, to the extent that these and other terms appear in their original form in this translation they are clearly enough explained. But wherever the word "thief" appears it means one of the "blatnýe."

The language of the Russian thieves is used in this work to refer to much more than themselves.

Thus a nonthief in thief language is a "fráyer." By virtue of being a nonthief he is also naturally "a mark," "a cull," "a pigeon," "an innocent," "a sucker." In this translation, "fráyer" has been rendered throughout as "sucker."

Some other terms that relate to the world of Gulag require special explanation:

At times in the text "ugolóvniki" (which we have translated as "habitual criminals") and "bytovikí" (which we have translated as "nonpolitical offenders") have been grouped together in contrast to the political prisoners.

A "bytovík" is *any* prisoner who is *not* a political nor one of the Russian thieves—and the "bytovikí" or "nonpolitical offenders" make up the enormous main mass of the prisoners. The distinction here is just as much psychological as legal, and in English there is nothing that exactly translates this Russian term.

The "ugolóvniki" or "habitual criminals" are obviously professionals and therefore approximately the same as the thieves.

Chapter 3 in Part I is entitled in Russian "Slédstviye." The correct, legally formal rendering of this word into English would be "investigation." The official conducting the "investigation" is a "slédovatel" or, again in the formal rendering, "investigator." I have, however, chosen, deliberately and after consideration and consultation, generally to translate these Russian terms respectively as "interrogation" and "interrogator." The text of the book makes the reason amply clear. There was in the period and the cases described here no content of "investigation" in this process, nor was there anyone who could legitimately be called an "investigator." There *was* interrogation and there *were* interrogators.

In camps prisoners were divided into those who went out on general-assignment work every day—and therefore died off—and those who got "cushy" jobs within the camp compound at

office work, as hospital orderlies, as cooks, bread cutters, assistants in the mess hall, etc., etc.—and thereby were in a better position to survive. These latter were contemptuously christened by the other prisoners "pridúrki"—derived from a verb meaning to shirk general-assignment work. I have here translated "pridúrki" as "trusties." As in many other cases there is no exact English equivalent, but this is certainly as close as there is.

Anyone who wishes to delve further into the lingo of Russian thieves and camps can well make use of the valuable book *Soviet Prison Camp Speech, a Survivor's Glossary,* compiled by Meyer Galler and Harlan E. Marquess, University of Wisconsin Press, 1972.

I wish to thank those who have given me invaluable assistance with this translation—and in the first place and in particular Frances Lindley, my experienced, able, and long-suffering editor at Harper & Row; Dick Passmore, my brilliant copy editor; Theodore Shabad, who has labored long and industriously over the glossary and details in footnotes and text; and also Nina Sobolev, for her long faithful hours of help of all kinds.

Michael Scammell, the well-known British translator and editor, was kind enough to come to New York during the final stages of the preparation of this manuscript and provide the benefit of his own considerable experience in giving the text one last thorough and most useful going over. I am deeply grateful to him.

There are several others who have done more for this project than I can possibly thank them for. But I can at least try—in the knowledge that they will know whom I mean when they read these lines.

Yet with all this, if there are faults in this translation, as no doubt there are, mine is the responsibility.

T.P.W.

Glossary

NAMES

Abakumov, Viktor Semyonovich (1894–1954). Stalin's Minister of State Security, 1946–1952. Executed in December, 1954, under Khrushchev.

Agranov, Yakov Savlovich (?–1939). Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs under Yagoda and Yezhov. Played important role in preparing show trials of 1936–1938. Shot in purges.

Aikhenvald, Yuli Isayevich (1872–1928). Critic and essayist, translated Schopenhauer into Russian. Exiled in 1922.

Akhmatova (Gorenko), Anna Andreyevna (1889–1966). Acmeist poet, wife of Nikolai Gumilyev. Denounced in 1946 as "alien to the Soviet people." Long unpublished in Soviet Union; some works published after 1956.

Aldanov (Landau), Mark Aleksandrovich (1886–1957). Writer of historical novels; emigrated 1919 to Paris, and later to New York.

Aldan-Semyonov, Andrei Ignatyevich (1908–). Soviet writer; imprisoned in Far East camps, 1938–1953. Author of memoirs.

Aleksandrov, A. I. Head of Arts Section of All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries; purged in 1935.

Alliluyevs. Family of Stalin's second wife, Nadezhda Sergeyevna.

Amfiteatrov, Aleksandr Valentinovich (1862–1938). Russian writer; emigrated 1920.

Anders, Wladyslaw (1892–1970). Polish general; formed Polish military units in Soviet Union and led them out to Iran in 1943.

Andreyev, Leonid Nikolayevich (1871–1919). Playwright and short story writer, close to Expressionism; died in Finland.

Andreyushkin, Pakhomi Ivanovich (1865–1887). Member of Narodnaya Volya terrorist group; executed after attempt to assassinate Alexander III in 1887.

Antonov-Saratovsky, Vladimir Pavlovich (1884–1965). Old Bolshe-

vik, served as judge in Shakhty (1928) and Promparty (1930) trials.

Averbakh, I. L. Soviet jurist; associate of Vyshinsky.

Babushkin, Ivan Vasilyevich (1873–1906). Russian revolutionary.

Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovich (1895–). Literary scholar, expert on Dostoyevsky. Unpublished in Soviet Union from 1930 to 1963.

Bakunin, Mikhail Aleksandrovich (1814–1876). A founder of Anarchism.

Bandera, Stepan (1909–1959). Ukrainian nationalist; led anti-Soviet forces in Ukraine after World War II until 1947; assassinated in Munich by a Soviet agent.

Bedny, Demyan (1883–1945). Soviet poet.

Belinsky, Vissarion Grigoryevich (1811–1848). Literary critic and ardent liberal, champion of socially-conscious literature.

Benois, Aleksandr Nikolayevich (1870–1960). Scenic designer; emigrated 1926 to Paris.

Berdyayev, Nikolai Aleksandrovich (1874–1948). Philosopher, religious thinker; opposed atheism and materialism. Expelled in 1922; lived in Paris after 1924.

Beria, Lavrenti Pavlovich (1899–1953). Georgian Bolshevik, became close Stalin associate in 1938, in charge of secret police and national security. Executed after Stalin's death.

Biron or Biren. Russian name of Count Ernst Johann Bühren (1690–1772). A favorite of Empress Anna Ivanovna, under whom he instituted a tyrannical rule.

Blok, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich (1880–1921). Symbolist poet.

Blücher, Marshal Vasily Konstantinovich (1890–1938). Commander of Far East Military District, 1929–1938; shot in purge.

Blyumkin, Yakov Grigoryevich (1898–1929). A Left Socialist Revolutionary; assassinated German Ambassador Mirbach in Moscow in 1918; later joined Cheka; executed after he took message from Trotsky to Radek.

Boky, Gleb Ivanovich (1879–1941). Secret police official; member of Supreme Court after 1927; arrested in 1937.

Bonch-Bruyevich, Vladimir Dmitriyevich (1873–1955). Bolshevik revolutionary; administrative officer of Council of People's Commissars, 1917–1920.

Bondarin, Sergei Aleksandrovich (1903–). Children's writer.

Budenny, Marshal Semyon Mikhailovich (1883–1973). Civil War hero; commander of Bolshevik cavalry; commander Southwest Front in early phase of World War II.

Bukharin, Nikolai Ivanovich (1888–1938). Prominent Party official and economic theorist; member of Politburo after 1924 and general

secretary of Comintern after 1926; expelled from Party in 1929; executed after 1938 show trial.

Bulgakov, Mikhail Afanasyevich (1891–1940). Satirist, most of whose writings have not been published in Soviet Union.

Bulgakov, Sergei Nikolayevich (1871–1944). Religious philosopher; exiled in 1922, lived in Paris.

Bunin, Ivan Alekseyevich (1870–1953). Writer; emigrated 1920 to France; won Nobel Prize in 1933.

Bunyachenko, Sergei K. (?–1946). Commander of 1st Division of Vlasov's forces in World War II; executed in Soviet Union in 1946.

Charnovsky, N. F. (1868–?). Soviet economic official; among defendants in 1930 Promparty trial.

Chekhovsky, Vladimir Moiseyevich (1877–?). Ukrainian nationalist.

Chernov, Viktor Mikhailovich (1873–1952). Socialist Revolutionary Party leader; emigrated in 1920.

Chubar, Vlas Yakovlevich (1891–1939). High Soviet Ukrainian official; shot in purges.

Chukovskaya, Lidiya Korneyevna (1907–). Soviet literary critic and writer (samizdat).

Dal (Dahl), Vladimir Ivanovich (1801–1872). Lexicographer.

Dan (Gurvich), Fyodor Ilyich (1871–1947). Menshevik leader, physician; exiled in 1922.

Denikin, Anton Ivanovich (1872–1947). Tsarist military leader; commanded anti-Bolshevik (White) forces in south, 1918–1920; emigrated.

Derzhavin, Gavriil Romanovich (1743–1816). Poet and statesman under Catherine II.

Dimitrov, Georgi Mikhailovich (1882–1949). Bulgarian Communist leader; chief defendant in 1933 Reichstag trial in Leipzig.

Dolgun, Alexander M. (Alexander D.) (1926–). American-born former employee of United States Embassy in Moscow; spent eight years (1948–1956) in Soviet prisons and labor camps; allowed to leave Soviet Union in 1971.

Donskoi, D. D. (1881–1936). Right Socialist Revolutionary.

Doyarenko, Aleksei G. Soviet agronomist; a defendant in Working Peasants Party case of 1931.

Dukhonin, Nikolai Nikolayevich (1876–1917). Commander in Chief of Tsarist Army; slain by soldiers.

Dyakov, Boris Aleksandrovich (1902–). Author of labor-camp memoirs.

Dzerzhinsky, Feliks Edmundovich (1877–1926). First chief of the secret police (Cheka-GPU-OGPU); succeeded by Menzhinsky.

Ehrenburg, Ilya Grigoryevich (1891–1967). Soviet writer and journalist; spent many years in Paris; author of memoirs of Stalin era.

Etinger, Y. G. (?–1952). Soviet physician, arrested in 1952 in so-called "doctors' case." Died under interrogation.

Fedotov, A. A. (1864–?). A Soviet official; defendant in Shakhty trial.

Figner, Vera Nikolayevna (1852–1942). A leader of Narodnaya Volya group, took part in successful conspiracy to assassinate Alexander II in 1881.

Filonenko, Maksimilian Maksimilianovich. Right Socialist Revolutionary; led anti-Bolshevik forces in Archangel in 1918.

Frank, Semyon Lyudvigovich (1877–1950). Religious philosopher, pupil of Solovyev; exiled in 1922.

Fyodor Ivanovich (1557–1598). Halfwit son of Ivan the Terrible, whom he succeeded in 1584. His regent was Boris Godunov, who reigned as Tsar, 1598–1605.

Gaaz, Fyodor Petrovich (Haas, Friedrich-Joseph) (1780–1853). German-born physician of Moscow prison hospital; sought penal reforms.

Gamarnik, Yan Borisovich (1894–1937). Soviet military leader who committed suicide during purge.

Garin, N. (Mikhailovsky, Nikolai Georgiyevich) (1852–1906). Marxist writer, who depicted young Tsarist engineers.

Gernet, Mikhail Nikolayevich (1874–?). Writer on the death penalty.

Ginzburg, Yevgeniya Semyonovna (1911–). Author of labor-camp memoirs, *Journey into the Whirlwind.*

Gippius, Zinaida Nikolayevna (1869–1945). Writer, wife of Merezhkovsky; emigrated in 1920.

Golikov, Marshal Filipp Ivanovich (1900–). Soviet military leader; supervised repatriation of Red Army prisoners from Germany.

Golyakov, Ivan Terentyevich. Presiding judge of Supreme Court under Stalin.

Gorky, Maxim (Peshkov, Aleksei Maksimovich) (1868–1936). Writer; opposed Bolsheviks at first and lived abroad (1921–1928); returned to Russia in 1931; died under mysterious circumstances.

Gots, Abram Rafailovich (1882–1940). A Right Socialist Revolutionary leader; a defendant in 1922 trial.

Govorov, Marshal Leonid Aleksandrovich (1897–1955). Soviet military leader.

Griboyedov, Aleksandr Sergeyevich (1795–1829). Playwright and diplomat.

Grigorenko, Pyotr Grigoryevich (1907–). Former Red Army general, became a dissident in 1961; in mental asylums since 1969.

Grigoryev, Iosif Fyodorovich (1890–1949). Prominent Soviet geologist.

Grin (Grinovsky), Aleksandr Stepanovich (1880–1932). Writer of romantic, fantastic adventure stories.

Grinevitsky, Ignati Ioakhimovich (1856–1881). Revolutionary, member of Narodnaya Volya group. Threw bomb that killed Alexander II March 13, 1881; was himself mortally wounded.

Groman, Vladimir Gustavovich (1873–?). High Soviet economic official; a defendant in 1931 trial of Mensheviks.

Gromyko, Andrei Andreyevich (1909–). Soviet diplomat; former ambassador to United States and delegate to United Nations; Foreign Minister since 1957.

Gul (Goul), Roman Borisovich (1896–). Émigré writer of historical works; editor of *Novy Zhurnal,* a magazine published in New York.

Gumilyev, Nikolai Stepanovich (1886–1921). Acmeist poet, first husband of Akhmatova; accused in anti-Soviet plot and executed.

Herzen, Aleksandr Ivanovich (1812–1870). Liberal writer.

Ilin, Ivan Aleksandrovich (1882–1954). Mystic philosopher, exiled in 1922.

Ivan Kalita (?–1340). Founder of Grand Duchy of Muscovy.

Ivanov-Razumnik (Ivanov, Razumnik Vasilyevich) (1876–1946). Left Socialist Revolutionary; served in Tsarist prison (1901) and in Soviet labor camps; went to Germany in 1941.

Izgoyev (Lande), Aleksandr Solomonovich (1872–c.1938). A Right Cadet writer; expelled from Soviet Union in 1922.

Izmailov, Nikolai Vasilyevich (1893–). Soviet literary scholar, editor of Pushkin's works.

Kaganovich, Lazar Moiseyevich (1893–). Close associate of Stalin, in charge of railroads. Ousted from leadership in 1957.

Kalinin, Mikhail Ivanovich (1875–1946). Nominal President of Soviet Union (1919–1946), first as Chairman of All-Russian Central Executive Committee until 1922, then as Chairman of Central Executive Committee of U.S.S.R., and after 1938 as Chairman of Presidium of Supreme Soviet.

Kamenev (Rosenfeld), Lev Borisovich (1883–1936). Prominent Bolshevik leader, expelled from Party in 1927, readmitted and re-expelled; executed after 1936 show trial.

Kaplan, Fanya (Dora) (1888–1918). A Left Socialist Revolutionary; executed after unsuccessful attempt on Lenin's life in 1918.

Karakozov, Dmitri Vladimirovich (1840–1866). Revolutionary; executed after unsuccessful attempt on life of Alexander II in 1866.

Karsavin, Lev Platonovich (1882–1952). Mystic philosopher; expert on medieval history; exiled in 1922.

Kasso, Lev Aristidovich (1865–1914). Reactionary Minister of Education under Nicholas II.

Katanyan, Ruben Pavlovich (1881–1966). Soviet state prosecuting official in 1920's and 1930's; arrested 1938.

Kazakov, Ignati Nikolayevich (1891–1938). Physician accused of having murdered Soviet officials through use of "lysates" (antibodies); shot after 1938 show trial.

Kerensky, Aleksandr Fyodorovich (1881–1970). A Socialist Revolutionary leader; headed Provisional Government, July to November, 1917; fled to France; died in New York.

Khrustalev-Nosar, Georgi Stepanovich (1877–1918). Elected Chairman of St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies in 1905; opposed Bolsheviks in Ukraine in 1918; shot by Bolsheviks.

Kirov (Kostrikov), Sergei Mironovich (1886–1934). Close Stalin associate; his murder in Leningrad, reputedly inspired by Stalin, set off wave of mass reprisals.

Kishkin, Nikolai Mikhailovich (1864–1930). A leader of Constitutional Democratic Party; a defendant in 1921 trial of famine-relief aides.

Kizevetter (Kiesewetter), Aleksandr Aleksandrovich (1866–1933). Cadet leader and historian; expelled in 1922; lived in Prague.

Klyuchevsky, Vasily Osipovich (1841–1911). Prominent historian.

Klyuyev, Nikolai Alekseyevich (1887–1937). Peasant poet; glorified ancient Russian values, opposing Western cultural influences; exiled to Siberia in early 1930's.

Kolchak, Aleksandr Vasilyevich (1873–1920). Tsarist admiral; led anti-Bolshevik forces in Siberia, 1918–1920; executed.

Koltsov, Nikolai Konstantinovich (1872–1940). Prominent biologist; founded experimental school in Russian biology.

Kondratyev, Nikolai Dmitriyevich (1892–?). Agricultural economist; figure in Working Peasants Party case in 1931.

Kornilov, Lavr Georgiyevich (1870–1918). Commander in Chief of Russian forces under Provisional Government; led revolt against Kerensky in August, 1917; fought Bolsheviks in Don area; killed in battle.

Korolenko, Vladimir Galaktionovich (1853–1921). Peasant democratic writer; persecuted under Tsars; viewed as bourgeois by Bolsheviks.

Kosarev, Aleksandr Vasilyevich (1903–1939). Leader of the Komsomol, 1929–1938.

Kosior, Stanislav Vikentyevich (1889–1939). Ukrainian Bolshevik leader; shot in purges.

Kozyrev, Nikolai Aleksandrovich (1908–). Astronomer; in prison, 1937–1948.

Krasikov, Pyotr Ananyevich (1870–1939). Old Bolshevik; prosecuting and justice official in 1920's and 1930's.

Krasnov (Levitin), Anatoly Emanuilovich (1915–). Religious writer; imprisoned under Stalin; in dissident movement after 1960.

Krasnov, Pyotr Nikolayevich (1869–1947). Don Cossack leader; emigrated in 1919; led pro-German Russian units in World War II; handed over by Allies after war and executed in Soviet Union.

Krestinsky, Nikolai Nikolayevich (1883–1938). Bolshevik Party official and diplomat; shot after 1938 show trial.

Kruglov, Sergei Nikiforovich (1903–). Minister of Interior, 1946–1956.

Krylenko, Nikolai Vasilyevich (1885–1938). Chief state prosecutor, 1918–1931; later People's Commissar of Justice; shot in 1938.

Krylov, Ivan Andreyevich (1769–1844). Noted fabulist.

Kuibyshev, Valerian Vladimirovich (1888–1935). Prominent economic planning official; died under mysterious circumstances.

Kupriyanov, G. N. Karelian Party official; arrested in 1949.

Kursky, Dmitri Ivanovich (1874–1932). People's Commissar of Justice, 1918–1928; envoy to Italy, 1928–1932.

Kuskova, Yekaterina Dmitriyevna (1869–1958). Cadet, later SR; figure in Famine Relief case 1921; exiled in 1922.

Kuznetsov, Aleksei Aleksandrovich (1905–1950). Lieutenant general, one of the organizers of the defense of Leningrad, Secretary of the Central Committee, convicted in connection with the Leningrad Affair.

Kuznetsov, Col. Gen. Vasily Ivanovich (1894–1964). Soviet military leader in World War II.

Lapshin, Ivan Ivanovich (1870–1948). Philosopher; exiled in 1922 to Prague, where he died.

Larichev, Viktor A. (1887–?). Chairman, Main Fuels Committee; figure in Promparty trial in 1930.

Larin, Y. (Lurye, Mikhail Aleksandrovich) (1882–1932). Agricultural economist; former Menshevik; helped found Soviet planning system.

Latsis (Lacis), Martyn Ivanovich (Sudrabs, Yan Fridrikhovich) (1888–1941). Early Cheka official, 1917–1921; director, Plekhanov Economics Institute, 1932–1937; arrested 1937.

Lelyushenko, Dmitri Danilovich (1901–). Soviet World War II leader.

Lermontov, Mikhail Yuryevich (1814–1841). Liberal poet.

Levina, Revekka Saulovna (1899–1964). Soviet economist.

Levitan, Yuri Borisovich (1914–). Soviet radio announcer noted for

his sonorous voice, which became familiar through announcement of major Soviet successes in World War II and other news events.

Levitin. *See* Krasnov, A. E.

Likhachev, Nikolai Petrovich (1862–1935). Historian, specialist on ikon painting.

Lomonosov, Mikhail Vasilyevich (1711–1765). Universal scholar; in Russian spiritual history, prototype of scientific genius arising from the people.

Lordkipanidze, G. S. (1881–1937). Georgian writer; died in purge.

Loris-Melikov, Mikhail Tarpelovich (1825–1888). Powerful Tsarist Interior Minister, 1880–1881; initiator of unimplemented reforms.

Lorkh, Aleksandr Georgiyevich (1889–). Prominent potato breeder.

Lossky, Nikolai Onufriyevich (1870–1965). Philosopher; exiled in 1922.

Lozovsky, A. (Dridzo, Solomon Abramovich) (1878–1952). Revolutionary; chief of Trade Union International, 1921–1937; Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs and head of Sovinformburo in World War II; shot in anti-Jewish purge.

Lunacharsky, Anatoly Vasilyevich (1875–1932). Marxist cultural theorist; People's Commissar for Education, 1917–1929.

Lunin, Mikhail Sergeyevich (1787–1845). One of the Decembrists; wrote philosophical and political tracts in Siberian exile.

Lysenko, Trofim Denisovich (1898–). Agricultural biologist; virtual dictator of Soviet science after 1940 under Stalin, and of biology in the Khrushchev era until 1964.

Maisky, Ivan Mikhailovich (1884–). Historian and diplomat; former Menshevik; envoy to Britain, 1932–1943; Deputy Foreign Commissar, 1943–1946.

Makarenko, Anton Semyonovich (1888–1939). Educator; organized rehabilitation colonies for juvenile delinquents.

Malinovsky, Roman Vatslavovich (1876–1918). Tsarist police informer planted among Bolsheviks; emigrated in 1914; returned to Russia voluntarily in 1918, when he was tried and executed.

Mandelstam, Osip Emilyevich (1891–1938). Acmeist poet; died in transit camp.

Mariya, Mother. *See* Skobtsova.

Markos, Gen. Vafiades (1906–). Greek leftist rebel leader, 1947–1948.

Martov (Tsederbaum), Yuli Osipovich (1873–1923). A Menshevik leader; exiled by Lenin in 1921.

Mayakovsky, Vladimir Vladimirovich (1893–1930). Futurist poet; suicide.

Meck, Nikolai Karlovich von (1863–1929). Tsarist railroad industrialist; worked for Bolsheviks after 1917; accused of counterrevolutionary activities and shot.

Melgunov, Sergei Petrovich (1879–1956). Historian and Popular Socialist leader; exiled in 1923; lived in Paris.

Menshikov, Aleksandr Danilovich (1673–1729). Military leader and statesman; favorite of Peter the Great and Catherine I.

Menzhinsky, Vyacheslav Rudolfovich (1874–1934). Secret police official; headed OGPU, 1926–1934.

Meretskov, Marshal Kirill Afanasyevich (1897–1968). World War II leader.

Merezhkovsky, Dmitri Sergeyevich (1865–1941). Philosopher and novelist; founder of Symbolist movement; emigrated 1919 to Paris.

Mikhailov, Nikolai Aleksandrovich (1906–). Chief of Komsomol, 1938–1952; later envoy to Poland and Indonesia, Minister of Culture, chairman of State Publishing Committee; retired 1970.

Mikolajczyk, Stanislaw (1901–1966). Polish Peasant Party leader; in Polish government in exile during World War II; in Polish postwar government, 1945–1947.

Mikoyan, Anastas Ivanovich (1895–). Close associate of Stalin; in charge of consumer-goods area; foreign policy adviser to Khrushchev; retired 1966.

Milyukov, Pavel Nikolayevich (1859–1943). Leader of Constitutional Democratic Party and historian; emigrated in 1920; died in U.S.A.

Mirovich, Vasily Yakovlevich (1740–1764). Attempted palace coup under Catherine II in favor of pretender Ivan IV Antonovich.

Molotov (Skryabin), Vyacheslav Mikhailovich (1890–). Close associate of Stalin; served as Premier and Foreign Minister; ousted by Khrushchev after so-called 1957 anti-Party coup; retired.

Monomakh. *See* Vladimir II.

Myakotin, Venedikt Aleksandrovich (1867–1937). Historian and a founder of Popular Socialist Party; exiled in 1922.

Nabokov (Sirin), Vladimir (1899–). Russian-American writer; son of F. D. Sirin, a Cadet leader, who emigrated in 1919.

Narokov (Marchenko), Nikolai Vladimirovich (1887–1969). Émigré writer; left Soviet Union in World War II; lived in Monterey, Calif.

Natanson, Mark Andreyevich (1850–1919). Populist, later a Socialist Revolutionary; sided with Bolsheviks during World War I; died in Switzerland.

Nekrasov, Nikolai Alekseyevich (1821–1878). Civic poet.

Novikov, Nikolai Ivanovich (1744–1818). Writer and social critic; incarcerated in Schlüsselburg Fortress under Catherine II.

Novorussky, Mikhail Vasilyevich (1861–1925). Revolutionary, convicted with Aleksandr Ulyanov after abortive attempt to assassinate Alexander III in 1887; death sentence commuted to imprisonment in Schlüsselburg.

Obolensky, Yevgeny Petrovich (1796–1865). One of the Decembrists; death sentence commuted to 20 years' Siberian exile.

Olitskaya, Yekaterina Lvovna (1898–). Soviet dissident writer whose prison-camp memoirs circulated in samizdat and were published in 1971 by Possev, Russian-language publishing house of Frankfurt, West Germany.

Olminsky (Aleksandrov), Mikhail Stepanovich (1863–1933). Early professional revolutionary, journalist.

Ordzhonikidze, Grigory (Sergo) Konstantinovich (1886–1937). Close associate of Stalin, charged with heavy industry; a suicide during purges.

Osorgin (Ilin), Mikhail Andreyevich (1878–1942). Writer; exiled in 1922.

Palchinsky, Pyotr Akimovich (1878–1929). Economist and mining engineer; chief defendant in Shakhty trial of 1928; shot.

Pasternak, Boris Leonidovich (1890–1960). Poet and novelist; 1958 Nobel laureate.

Perkhurov, Aleksandr Petrovich (1876–1922). Anti-Bolshevik military commander; shot in Yaroslavl in 1922.

Peshekhonov, Aleksei Vasilyevich (1867–1933). Writer; exiled in 1922.

Peshkova-Vinaver, Yekaterina Pavlovna (1876–1965). First wife of Maxim Gorky; headed Political Red Cross.

Pestel, Pavel Ivanovich (1793–1826). One of the Decembrists, leader of radical wing; hanged.

Peters, Yakov Khristoforovich (1886–1942). Latvian revolutionary; high secret police official in 1920's; liquidated.

Petlyura, Simon Vasilyevich (1879–1926). Ukrainian nationalist leader; headed anti-Bolshevik forces in Ukraine, 1918–1919; assassinated in Paris exile.

Pilnyak (Vogau), Boris Andreyevich (1894–1937). Soviet writer; accused of distorting revolutionary events; died in prison.

Platonov, Sergei Fyodorovich (1860–1933). Historian; in official disfavor in early 1930's.

Plekhanov, Georgi Valentinovich (1856–1918). Marxist philosopher and historian, became a Menshevik leader; opposed Bolsheviks' 1917 coup.

Pletnev, Dmitri Dmitriyevich (1872–1953). Physician; sentenced to 25 years after 1938 show trial.

Pobedonostsev, Konstantin Petrovich (1827–1907). Lawyer and politician; Procurator of the Holy Synod; his reactionary Russian nationalist views were influential under Alexander III and in the early reign of Nicholas II.

Postyshev, Pavel Petrovich (1887–1940). Ukrainian Bolshevik leader; arrested in 1938; died in prison.

Potemkin, Grigory Aleksandrovich (1739–1791). Military leader and favorite of Catherine the Great.

Prokopovich, Sergei Nikolayevich (1871–1955). Economist and a Cadet leader; figure in 1921 Famine Relief Commission trial; expelled 1922.

Ptukhin, Lieut. Gen. Yevgeny Savvich (1900–1941). Soviet Air Force commander; executed after German attack against Soviet Union.

Pugachev, Yemelyan Ivanovich (1742–1775). Leader of a major peasant revolt against Catherine II; executed.

Radek, Karl Berngardovich (1885–1939). Comintern official, later journalist; shot after 1937 show trial.

Radishchev, Aleksandr Nikolayevich (1749–1802). Writer and social critic; exiled to Siberia by Catherine II.

Rakovsky, Khristian Georgiyevich (1873–1941). Bolshevik official who served as Ukrainian Premier, 1919–1923, and diplomat, 1923–1927; imprisoned after 1938 show trial; daughter Yelena arrested 1948.

Ramzin, Leonid Konstantinovich (1887–1948). Heat engineer; principal defendant in 1930 Promparty trial; death sentence commuted to 10 years; professionally active again during World War II.

Ransome, Arthur (1884–1967). British journalist; wrote on Bolshevik Revolution.

Raskolnikov (Ilin), Fyodor Fyodorovich (1892–1939). Bolshevik diplomat; defected in France; died under mysterious circumstances.

Rasputin, Grigory Yefimovich (1872–1916). Adventurer with strong influence over family of Nicholas II; killed by courtiers.

Razin, Stepan Timofeyevich (Stenka) (1630?–1671). Leader of a Cossack and peasant rebellion in the middle and lower Volga territories, he was defeated and executed; legendary figure in Russian national poetry.

Reilly, Sidney George (1874–1925). British intelligence officer; killed while crossing Soviet-Finnish border.

Repin, Ilya Yefimovich (1844–1930). Prominent painter; one of his works depicts the Volga boatmen.

Rokossovsky, Marshal Konstantin Konstantinovich (1896–1968). Soviet World War II leader; Defense Minister in Poland, 1949–1956.

Romanov, Panteleimon Sergeyevich (1884–1938). Soviet satirist.

Rudzutak, Yan Ernestovich (1887–1938). Associate of Stalin; arrested 1937; died in prison.

Ryabushinsky, Pavel Pavlovich (1871–1924). Russian industrialist and anti-Bolshevik leader; mentioned in 1930 Promparty trial.

Rykov, Aleksei Ivanovich (1881–1938). Close associate of Stalin; Premier of Soviet Union, 1924–1930; shot after 1938 show trial.

Ryleyev, Kondrati Fyodorovich (1795–1826). A Decembrist; hanged.

Rysakov, Nikolai Ivanovich (1861–1881). A revolutionary of Narodnaya Volya group; executed after assassination of Alexander II in 1881.

Ryumin, M. D. (?–1953). Secret police official who engineered the "doctors' case"; executed 1953.

Ryurik. Legendary Varangian prince who came to Novgorod in mid-ninth century and founded first Russian dynasty.

Sakharov, Col. Igor K. Émigré who commanded pro-German Russian military unit in World War II.

Saltychikha (Saltykova, Darya Nikolayevna) (1730–1801). Woman landowner in Moscow Province; noted for cruel treatment of serfs.

Samsonov, Aleksandr Vasilyevich (1859–1914). Tsarist general; suicide after his forces were defeated in East Prussia in World War I.

Savinkov, Boris Viktorovich (1879–1925). A Socialist Revolutionary leader; arrested after he re-entered Russia illegally in 1924.

Savva (1327–1406). Russian Orthodox saint; pupil of Sergius of Radonezh.

Sedin, Ivan K. People's Commissar for Petroleum in World War II.

Selivanov, Dmitri Fyodorovich (1885–?). Mathematician; emigrated 1922.

Serebryakova, Galina Iosifovna (1905–). Writer; author of camp memoirs.

Sergius of Radonezh (1321–1391). Russian Orthodox saint; founded monasteries, including Trinity-St. Sergius at Zagorsk, near his home town, Radonezh.

Serov, Ivan Aleksandrovich (1905–). Secret police official; chairman of KGB, 1954–1958.

Shalamov, Varlam Tikhonovich (1907–). Writer; spent 17 years in Kolyma camps; author of *Kolyma Stories* (Paris, 1969).

Shchastny, Captain Aleksei Mikhailovich (?–1918). Commander of Red Baltic Fleet; executed.

Shcherbakov, Alekandr Sergeyevich (1901–1945). Close associate of Stalin; Moscow city secretary, 1938–1945; Chief of Red Army's Political Department, 1942–1945.

Sheinin, Lev Romanovich (1906–1967). Soviet prosecuting and investigatory official; wrote spy stories after 1950.

Sheshkovsky, Stepan Ivanovich (1727–1793). Judicial investigator under Catherine II; known for harsh interrogatory techniques.

Shmidt, Pyotr Petrovich (1867–1906). Lieutenant in Black Sea Fleet; executed after Sevastopol revolt.

Sholokhov, Mikhail Aleksandrovich (1905–). Soviet writer; 1965 Nobel laureate.

Shulgin, Vasily Vitalyevich (1878–1965). Monarchist; emigrated after 1917 Revolution; caught by Red Army in Yugoslavia at end of World War II; served 10 years in labor camp.

Shvernik, Nikolai Mikhailovich (1888–1970). Associate of Stalin; trade-union chief, 1930–1944 and 1953–1956; President of Soviet Union, 1946–1953.

Sikorski, Wladyslaw (1881–1943). Military leader of Polish exiles.

Skobtsova, Yelizaveta Yuryevna (1892–1945). Acmeist poet; emigrated to Paris, where she became a nun (Mother Mariya); died in Nazi camp.

Skrypnik, Nikolai Alekseyevich (1872–1933). Ukrainian People's Commissar for Justice (1922–1927) and Education (1927–1933); suicide.

Skuratov, Malyuta (Belsky, Grigory Lukyanovich) (?–1572). Trusted aide of Ivan the Terrible; personifies Ivan's cruelties; headed Oprichnina, a policelike organization.

Smirnov, Ivan Nikitovich (1881–1936). Soviet People's Commissar for Communications, 1923–1927; expelled from Party; shot after 1936 trial.

Smushkevich, Yakov Vladimirovich (1902–1941). Soviet Air Force commander; executed after German invasion.

Sokolnikov, Grigory Yakovlevich (1888–1939). Soviet People's Commissar of Finance, 1922–1926; envoy to Britain, 1929–1934; sentenced to 10 years after 1937 show trial; died in prison.

Solovyev, Vladimir Sergeyevich (1853–1900). Religious philosopher; sought synthesis of Russian Orthodox faith and Western scientific thought and Roman Catholicism.

Stalin, Iosif Vissarionovich (1879–1953). Soviet political leader; named General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1922. After Lenin's death in 1924, he gradually eliminated political rivals in series of purges culminating in great trials of 1936–1938. His original family name was Dzhugashvili; revolutionary party name was Koba.

Stanislavsky, Konstantin Sergeyevich (1863–1938). Stage director; cofounder of the Moscow Art Theater in 1898; known in the West

for the "Stanislavsky method" of acting technique.

Stepun, Fyodor Augustovich (1884–1965). Philosopher; expelled in 1922.

Stolypin, Pyotr Arkadyevich (1862–1911). Tsarist statesman; served as Minister of Interior after 1906; known for agrarian reform resettling poor peasants in Siberia; slain by an SR.

Sudrabs. *See* Latsis.

Sukhanov (Gimmer), Nikolai Nikolayevich (1882–1940). Menshevik historian; meeting at his apartment in Petrograd in October, 1917, the Bolsheviks decided to launch an armed uprising; figure in 1931 Menshevik trial; released after hunger strike; rearrested in purges of late 1930's; author of detailed account of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Surikov, Vasily Ivanovich (1848–1916). Historical painter of the realist school.

Suvorov, Aleksandr Vasilyevich (1729–1800). Military leader; led Italian and Swiss campaigns against Napoleon.

Svechin, Aleksandr Andreyevich (1878–1935). Military historian; shot.

Sverdlov, Yakov Mikhailovich (1885–1919). First Soviet President.

Tagantsev, Nikolai Stepanovich (1843–1923). Writer on criminal law.

Tarle, Yevgeny Viktorovich (1875–1955). Soviet historian; was briefly in official disfavor in early 1930's.

Tikhon, Patriarch (1865–1925). Head of Russian Orthodox Church after 1917; detained 1922–1923 on oppositionist charges.

Timofeyev-Ressovsky, Nikolai Vladimirovich (1900–). Soviet radiobiologist; worked in Germany, 1924–1945; spent 10 years in Stalin camps after return to Soviet Union.

Tolstoi, Alexandra Lvovna (1884–). Youngest dauthter of Lev Tolber of 1937 Supreme Soviet (national legislature).

Tolstoi, Alexandra Lvovna (1884–). Youngest daughter of Lev Tolstoi; author of a biography of her father; lives in the U.S., where she founded the Tolstoi Foundation for aid to refugees.

Tomsky, Mikhail Pavlovich (1880–1936). First Soviet chief of trade unions, until 1929; suicide in Stalin purges.

Trotsky (Bronshtein), Lev (Leon) Davidovich (1879–1940). Associate of Lenin; first Soviet Defense Commissar, until 1925; expelled from Party in 1927; deported to Turkey in 1929; slain in Mexico City by a Soviet agent.

Trubetskoi, Sergei Petrovich (1790–1860). One of the Decembrists; death sentence commuted to exile; amnestied in 1856.

Tsvetayeva, Marina Ivanovna (1892–1941). Poet; lived abroad 1922 to 1939; a suicide two years after return to Soviet Union.

Tukhachevsky, Mikhail Nikolayevich (1893–1937). Soviet military leader; shot in 1937 on trumped-up treason charges.

Tur Brothers. Pen names of two playwrights and authors of spy stories: Leonid Davydovich Tubelsky (1905–1961) and Pyotr Lvovich Ryzhei (1908–).

Tynyanov, Yuri Nikolayevich (1895–1943). Soviet writer and literary scholar.

Ulrikh, Vasily Vasilyevich (1889–1951). Supreme Court justice; presided over major trials of 1920's and 1930's.

Ulyanov, Aleksandr Ilyich (1866–1887). Lenin's older brother; executed after unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Alexander III in 1887.

Ulyanova (Yelizarova-Ulyanova), Anna Ilyinichna (1874–1935). Lenin's sister; journalist and editor.

Uritsky, Moisei Solomonovich (1873–1918). Revolutionary; chairman of the Petrograd Cheka; his assassination by an SR set off Red Terror.

Utyosov, Leonid Osipovich (1895–). Soviet orchestra leader and variety-stage star.

Valentinov (Volsky), Nikolai Vladislavovich (1879–1964). Journalist and philosopher; former Bolshevik turned Menshevik; emigrated 1930.

Vasilyev-Yuzhin, Mikhail Ivanovich (1876–1937). Revolutionary; secret police and justice official.

Vavilov, Nikolai Ivanovich (1887–1943). Prominent plant geneticist; Director of Institute of Applied Botany (1924–1940) and Institute of Genetics (1930–1940); arrested 1940; died in imprisonment.

Vereshchagin, Vasily Vasilyevich (1842–1904). Painter noted for battle scenes.

Vladimir II Monomakh. Ruler of Kievan Russia, 1113–1125.

Vladimirov (Sheinfinkel), Miron Konstantinovich (1879–1925). Early Soviet official in agriculture, finance and economic management.

Vlasov, Lieut. Gen. Andrei Andreyevich (1900–1946). Red Army officer; captured by Germans in 1942; led Russian forces against Soviet Union; handed over by Allies after war and executed.

Voikov, Pyotr Lazarevich (1888–1927). Bolshevik revolutionary; Soviet representative in Warsaw, 1924–1927; assassinated by an émigré.

Voloshin, Maksimilian Aleksandrovich (1878–1932). Symbolist poet and watercolorist; opposed Bolsheviks.

Voroshilov, Kliment Yefremovich (1881–1969). Close associate of Stalin; long Defense Commissar; Soviet President, 1953–1960.

Vysheslavtsev, Boris Petrovich (1877–1954). Philosopher; exiled in 1922.

Vyshinsky, Andrei Yanuaryevich (1883–1954). Lawyer and diplomat; former Menshevik turned Bolshevik; chief state prosecutor in show trials, 1936–1938; Deputy Foreign Commissar and Minister, 1939–1949 and 1953–1954; Foreign Minister, 1949–1953.

Wrangel, Pyotr Nikolayevich (1878–1928). Tsarist military commander; led anti-Bolshevik forces in South in 1920 after Denikin.

Yagoda, Genrikh Grigoryevich (1891–1938). Secret police official; People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, 1934–1936; shot after 1938 show trial.

Yakubovich, Pyotr Filippovich (1860–1911). Poet; translated Baudelaire; wrote memoirs about his Tsarist exile.

Yaroshenko, Nikolai Aleksandrovich (1846–1898). Painter.

Yenukidze, Avel Safronovich (1877–1937). Bolshevik official; Secretary of Central Executive Committee, 1918–1935; shot in purges.

Yermilov, Vladimir Vladimirovich (1904–1965). Soviet literary critic.

Yesenin, Sergei Aleksandrovich (1895–1925). Imagist poet; suicide.

Yezhov, Nikolai Ivanovich (1895–1939). Secret police official; People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, 1936–1938.

Yudenich, Nikolai Nikolayevich (1862–1933). Tsarist military commander; led anti-Bolshevik forces in Estonia, 1918–1920.

Zalygin, Sergei Pavlovich (1913–). Soviet writer.

Zamyatin, Yevgeny Ivanovich (1884–1937). Writer; returned 1917 from abroad, but opposed Bolsheviks; emigrated in 1932; his novel *We,* published in London in 1924, influenced Huxley, Orwell.

Zasulich, Vera Ivanovna (1849–1919). Revolutionary; acquitted after attempt to assassinate Mayor of St. Petersburg; emigrated 1880; returned 1905; became Menshevik.

Zavalishin, Dmitri Irinarkhovich (1804–1892). One of the Decembrists; sentenced to 20 years' Siberian exile; worked as journalist after 1863.

Zhdanov, Andrei Aleksandrovich (1896–1948). Close associate of Stalin; shaped cultural policy after World War II.

Zhebrak, Anton Romanovich (1901–1965). Soviet geneticist.

Zhelyabov, Andrei Ivanovich (1851–1881). Revolutionary; executed after his assassination of Alexander II in 1881.

Zhukov, Marshal Georgi Konstantinovich (1896–). World War II leader.

Zinoviev (Apfelbaum), Grigory Yevseyevich (1883–1936). Associate of Lenin; expelled from Party in 1927; shot after 1936 show trial.

INSTITUTIONS AND TERMS

All-Russian Central Executive Committee. *See* VTsIK.

April Theses. A programmatic statement issued by Lenin in April, 1917, calling for end of war with Germany and transfer of power to the Soviets.

Basmachi. Name given to anti-Bolshevik forces in Central Asia after 1917 Revolution.

Black Hundreds. Armed reactionary groups in Tsarist Russia; active from about 1905 to 1917 in pogroms of Jews and political assassinations of liberal personalities.

Butyrki. A major Moscow prison, named for a district of Moscow; often known also as Butyrka.

Cadet. *See* Constitutional Democratic Party.

Chechen. Ethnic group of Northern Caucasus; exiled by Stalin in 1944 on charges of collaboration with German forces.

Cheka. Original name of the Soviet secret police, 1917–1922; succeeded by GPU.

Chinese Eastern Railroad. A Manchurian rail system built (1897–1903) as part of original Trans-Siberian Railroad. Jointly operated by Chinese and Soviet authorities until 1935 (when it was sold to Japanese-dominated Manchukuo government) and again in 1945–1950. Russian acronym: KVZhD.

Codes. The 1926 Criminal Code and the 1923 Code of Criminal Procedure were repealed in 1958 with the adoption of new Fundamental Principles of Criminal Legislation and Criminal Procedure; in 1960 these were embodied in a new Criminal Code and a new Code of Criminal Procedure.

Collegium. Governing board of Soviet government departments and other institutions.

Comintern. Acronym for Communist International, the world organization of Communist parties that existed from 1919 to 1943.

Committee of the Poor, also known by the Russian acronym Kombed. A Bolshevik-dominated organization of poor peasants (1918).

Constituent Assembly. A multiparty legislative body with large anti-Bolshevik majority, elected in November, 1917, after the Bolshevik Revolution. It met in January, 1918, but was broken up when it refused to adopt Bolshevik proposals.

Constitutional Democratic Party. Founded in 1905 under the Tsars, advocating a constitutional monarchy; played a conservative role after overthrow of Tsar; members were known as Cadets, from a Russian acronym for the party.

Council of People's Commissars. Name given the Soviet cabinet (government) before 1946, when it became the Council of Ministers; also known by Russian acronym Sovnarkom.

Crimean Tatars. Exiled by Stalin to Central Asia in 1944 on charges of collaboration with Germans.

Dashnak. Anti-Bolshevik group in Armenia after 1917 Revolution.

Decembrists. Group of Russian officers who took part in unsuccessful liberal uprising against Nicholas I in December, 1825.

Doctors' case. The arrest of leading Kremlin physicians, most of them Jews, in 1952 on trumped-up charges of plotting against the lives of Soviet leaders. At least one, Y. G. Etinger, is believed to have died under interrogation; the others were released after Stalin's death in 1953.

Famine Relief, State Commission for. A Soviet governmental body, set up in 1921–1922; also known by the Russian acronym Pomgol.

GPU. Designation for Soviet secret police in 1922; acronym for Russian words meaning State Political Administration; continued to be used popularly after 1922, when the official designation became OGPU, acronym for United State Political Administration.

Gulag. The Soviet penal system under Stalin; a Russian acronym for Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps.

Hehalutz. Zionist movement that prepared young Jews for settling in Holy Land; it founded most of the kibbutzim.

Hiwi. German designation for Russian volunteers in German armed forces during World War II; acronym for Hilfswillige.

Industrial Academy. A Moscow school that served as training ground of industrial managers in late 1920's and early 1930's.

Industrial Party. *See* Promparty.

Informburo. *See* Sovinformburo.

Ingush. Ethnic group of Northern Caucasus; exiled by Stalin in 1944 on charges of collaboration with Germans.

Isolator. (1) Type of political prison established in early stage of Soviet regime for fractious Bolsheviks and other political foes. (2) In a labor camp, the designation for a building with punishment cells.

Kalmyks. Ethnic group of Northern Caucasus; exiled by Stalin in 1943 on charges of collaboration with German forces.

KGB. Acronym for Soviet secret police after 1953; stands for State Security Committee.

Khalkhin-Gol. River on border between China and Mongolia. Scene of Soviet-Japanese military clashes in 1939.

Khasan. Lake on Soviet-Chinese border, near Sea of Japan. Scene of Soviet-Japanese military clash in 1938.

Kolyma. Region of northeast Siberia; center of labor camps under Stalin.

Komsomol. Russian acronym for Young Communist League.

KVZhD. *See* Chinese Eastern Railroad.

Labor day. Accounting unit on collective farms.

Lubyanka. Popular designation for secret police headquarters and prison in central Moscow, named for adjacent street and square (now Dzerzhinsky Street and Square); housed Rossiya Insurance Company before the 1917 Revolution.

Makhorka. A coarse tobacco (*Nicotiana rustica*) grown mainly in the Ukraine.

Mensheviks. Democratic faction of Marxist socialists; split in 1903 from Bolshevik majority; repressed after 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

MGB. Initials for Soviet secret police, 1946–1953; acronym for Ministry of State Security; succeeded by KGB.

MVD. Russian acronym for Ministry of Interior; performed secret police function briefly in 1953.

Narodnaya Volya (literal translation: People's Will). Secret terrorist society dedicated to overthrowing Tsarism; existed from 1879 until disbanded in 1881 after assassination of Alexander II.

Narodnik (Populist). Member of populist revolutionary movement under the Tsars.

NEP. Acronym for New Economic Policy, a period of limited private enterprise, 1921–1928.

Nine grams. A bullet.

NKGB. Designation of Soviet secret police, 1943–1946; acronym for People's Commissariat of State Security.

NKVD. Designation of Soviet secret police, 1934–1943; acronym for People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs.

OGPU. Designation of Soviet secret police, 1922–1934; acronym for United State Political Administration.

Okhrana. Name of Tsarist secret police from 1881 to 1917; Russian word means "protection," replacing the full designation Department for the Protection of Public Security and Order.

OSO. *See* Special Board.

People's Commissariat. Name of Soviet government departments from 1917 to 1946, when they were renamed "Ministry."

Petrograd. Official name of Leningrad, 1914–1924.

Polizei. German word for "police"; designation of Russians who served as police under German occupation in World War II.

Pomgol. *See* Famine Relief.

Popular Socialist Party. Founded in 1906, it favored general democratic reforms, opposed terrorism.

Promparty. Mixed Russian-English acronym for Industrial Party (in Russian, Promyshlennaya Partiya). Nonexistent underground to which the organization of industrial managers tried in 1930 allegedly belonged.

Provisional Government. Coalition government of Russia after overthrow of Tsarism, March to November, 1917; first under Prince Georgi Lvov, later under Kerensky; overthrown by Bolsheviks.

Revolutionary Tribunal (Revtribunal). Special Soviet courts (1917–1922), which tried counterrevolutionary cases.

Russkaya Pravda. Political program of the Decembrists; drafted by Pestel; the Russian words mean "Russian truth."

Sapropelite Committee. A scientific study group that sought to use bituminous lake-bottom ooze, or sapropel, as a fuel around 1920.

Schlüsselburg. Fortress on Lake Ladoga, at outlet of Neva River; used as political prison under Tsars; now called Petrokrepost.

Schutzbund. Armed contingents of Austrian Social Democrats; members sought refuge in Soviet Union in 1934 after defeat in civil war.

Sharashka. Russian prison slang for a special research center in which the research scientists, specialists, and technicians are all prisoners under prison discipline.

Short Course. Familiar title of the standard Stalinist version of the history of the Soviet Communist Party; used as the official text from 1938 until after Stalin's death in 1953.

SMERSH. Acronym for Soviet counterintelligence during World War II; stands for "death to spies."

Smolny. Former girls' school; Communist Party headquarters in Leningrad.

Socialist Revolutionary Party. Created in 1890's out of several populist groups; split at first congress held in Finland in December, 1905, into right wing, opposed to terrorism, and left wing, favoring terrorism; SR's played key role in Provisional Government; left wing cooperated briefly with Bolsheviks after Revolution.

Solovetsky Islands (colloquially known as **Solovki**). Island group in White Sea, with monasteries; used as place of exile for rebellious priests in Middle Ages; early forced-labor camp (SLON) after 1917 Revolution.

Sovinformburo. Soviet information agency in World War II.

Sovnarkom. *See* Council of People's Commissars.

Special Board (Russian acronym: **OSO**). Three-man boards of People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, with powers to sentence "socially dangerous" persons without trial; abolished in 1953.

SR. *See* Socialist Revolutionary Party.

Stolypin car. A railroad car used to transport prisoners, named for P. A. Stolypin; also known in prison slang as vagonzak, for vagon zaklyuchennykh (prisoner car).

Supreme Council of the Economy. Highest industrial management agency in early years of Soviet regime; established in 1917; abolished 1932, when it was divided into industrial ministries.

Supreme Soviet. The national legislature of the Soviet Union, with counterparts in its constituent republics; meets usually twice a year to approve decisions taken by the Soviet leadership. Its lawmaking function is performed between sessions by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet; nominally the highest state body in the Soviet Union.

Time of Troubles. A period of hardship and confusion during the Polish and Swedish invasions of Russia in the early seventeenth century.

Union Bureau. *See* Mensheviks.

UPK. Code of Criminal Procedure. *See* Codes.

Verkhtrib. Russian acronym for Supreme Tribunal (1918–1922), which tried the most important cases in the early Soviet period.

Vikzhel. Railroad workers union, opposed Bolsheviks after 1917 Revolution; acronym stands for All-Russian Executive Committee of Railroad Workers Union.

VSNKh. *See* Supreme Council of the Economy.

VTsIK. Acronym for All-Russian Central Executive Committee, the highest state body of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, the largest Soviet state, from 1917 to 1937, when it was succeeded by the Presidium of the Republic's Supreme Soviet. The national equivalent of VTsIK was TsIK, the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R. (1922–1938), which became the Presidium of the national Supreme Soviet.

Workers Opposition. Bolshevik faction that sought greater trade-union control of industry and greater democracy within Party; its activities were condemned at Tenth Party Congress in 1921, and some leaders were later expelled from Party and arrested.

Zek. Prison slang for prisoner, derived from zaklyuchenny, Russian word for "prisoner."

Zemstvo. Local government unit in prerevolutionary Russia.

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THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO

Also by Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn

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The First Circle
For the Good of the Cause
We Never Make Mistakes
One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich

Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn

THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO

1918–1956

An Experiment in Literary Investigation

III-IV

Translated from the Russian by Thomas P. Whitney

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PART III

The Destructive-Labor Camps*

■

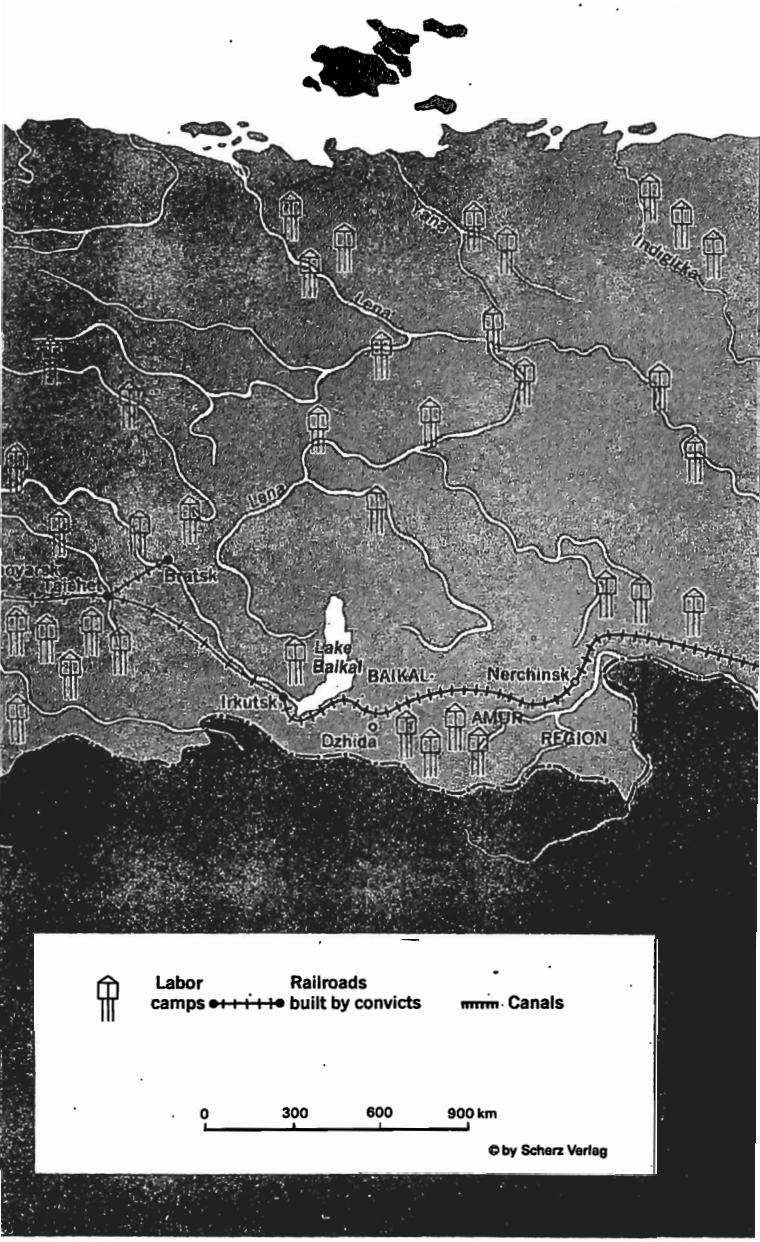
"Only those can understand us who ate from the same bowl with us."

Quotation from a letter of a Hutzul girl, a former zek*

* *See Translator's Notes, page 673.*

THE DESTRUCTIVE-LABOR CAMPS

Dudinka
Vorkuta
Salekhard
Ob
Irtysh
Tobolsk
SVERDLOVSK
Ob
Chelyabinsk
Magnitogorsk
Verkne Uralsk
OMSK
Mariinsk
Kemerovo
NOVOSIBIRSK
Akmolinsk
Bayan Aul
Karaganda
Aral Sea
Syr Darya
Mointy
Lake Balkhash
CASPIAN SEA
Amu Darya
Krasnovodsk
BAKU
TASHKENT
Frunze
Samarkand


Lena
Lena
Indigirka
Bratsk
Lake Baikal
BAIKAL-AMUR REGION
Nerchinsk
Irkutsk
Dzhida
Labor camps
Railroads built by convicts
Canals
0
300
600
900 km
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CHUKOTKA
Kolyma
Anadyr
Orotukan
Atka
Okhotsk
Magadan
KAMCHATKA
SEA OF OKHOTSK
Petropavlovsko
Nikolayevsk
Komsomolsk
Sovetskaya Gavan
Nakhodka
Vladivostok

Solzhenitsyn, July, 1946, as a prisoner in the Kaluga Gates Camp, Moscow

There is no limit to what should be included in this part. To attain and encompass its savage meaning one would have to drag out many lives in the camps—the very same in which one cannot survive for even one term without some special advantage because they were invented for *destruction.*

And from this it follows that all those who drank of this most deeply, who explored it most fully, are already in their graves and cannot tell us. No one now can ever tell us the *most important thing* about these camps.

And the whole scope of this story and of this truth is beyond the capabilities of one lonely pen. All I had was a peephole into the Archipelago, not the view from a tower. But, fortunately, several other books have emerged and more will emerge. In the *Kolyma Stories* of Shalamov the reader will perhaps feel more truly and surely the pitilessness of the spirit of the Archipelago and the limits of human despair.

To taste the sea all one needs is one gulp.

Chapter 1

■

The Fingers of Aurora

Rosy-fingered Eos, so often mentioned in Homer and called Aurora by the Romans, caressed, too, with those fingers the first early morning of the Archipelago.

When our compatriots heard via the BBC that M. Mihajlov claimed to have discovered that concentration camps had existed in our country as far back as 1921, many of us (and many in the West too) were astonished: That early really? Even in 1921?

Of course not! Of course Mihajlov was in error. In 1921, in fact, concentration camps were already in full flower (already even *coming to an end*). It would be far more accurate to say that the Archipelago was born with the shots of the cruiser *Aurora.**

And how could it have been otherwise? Let us pause to ponder.

Didn't Marx and Engels teach that the old bourgeois machinery of compulsion had to be broken up, and *a new one created* immediately in its place? And included in the machinery of compulsion were: the army (we are not surprised that the Red Army was created at the beginning of 1918); the police (the militia* was inaugurated even sooner than the army); the courts (from November 22, 1917); and the prisons. How, in establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, could they delay with a new type of prison?

That is to say that it was altogether impermissible to delay in the matter of prisons, whether old or new. In the first months after the October Revolution Lenin was already demanding "the most

decisive, draconic measures to tighten up discipline."[1] And are draconic measures possible—without prison?

What new could the proletarian state contribute here? Lenin was feeling out new paths. In December, 1917, he suggested for consideration the following assortment of punishments: "confiscation of all property . . . confinement in prison, dispatch to the front and forced labor for all who disobey the existing law."[2] Thus we can observe that the leading idea of the Archipelago—*forced labor*—had been advanced in the first month after the October Revolution.

And even while sitting peacefully among the fragrant hay mowings of Razliv* and listening to the buzzing bumblebees, Lenin could not help but ponder the future penal system. Even then he had worked things out and reassured us: "The suppression of the minority of exploiters by the majority of the hired slaves of yesterday is a matter so comparatively easy, simple and natural, that it is going to cost much less in blood . . . will be much cheaper for humanity" than the preceding suppression of the majority by the minority.[3]

According to the estimates of émigré Professor of Statistics Kurganov, this "comparatively easy" internal repression cost us, from the beginning of the October Revolution up to 1959, a total of . . . sixty-six million—66,000,000—lives. We, of course, cannot vouch for his figure, but we have none other that is official. And just as soon as the official figure is issued the specialists can make the necessary critical comparisons.

It is interesting to compare other figures. How large was the total staff of the *central* apparatus of the terrifying Tsarist Third Department, which runs like a strand through all the great Russian literature? At the time of its creation it had sixteen persons, and at its height it had forty-five. A ridiculously small number for even the remotest Cheka provincial headquarters in the country. Or, how many political prisoners did the February Revolution find in the Tsarist "Prison of the Peoples"? All these figures do exist somewhere. In all probability there were more than a hundred such prisoners in the Kresty Prison alone, and several hundred returned from Siberian exile and hard labor, and

1. Lenin, *Sobrannye Sochinenïya* (*Collected Works*), fifth edition, Vol. 36, p. 217.
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 176.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 33, p. 90.

how many more were languishing in the prison of every provincial capital! But it is interesting to know—exactly how many. Here is a figure for Tambov, taken from the fiery local papers. The February Revolution, which opened wide the doors of the Tambov Prison, found there political prisoners in the number of . . . seven (7) persons. And there were more than forty provinces. (It is superfluous to recall that from February to July, 1917, there were no political arrests, and after July the number imprisoned could be counted on one's fingers.)

Here, however, was the trouble: The first Soviet government was a coalition government, and a portion of the people's commissariats had to be allotted, like it or not, to the Left SR's, including, unhappily, the People's Commissariat of Justice, which fell to them. Guided by rotten petty bourgeois concepts of freedom, this People's Commissariat of Justice brought the penal system to the verge of ruin. The sentences turned out to be too light, and they made hardly any use at all of the progressive principle of forced labor. In February, 1918, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, Comrade Lenin, demanded that the number of places of imprisonment be increased and that repression of criminals be intensified,[4] and in May, already going over to concrete guidance, he gave instructions[5] that the sentence for bribery must be *not less than* ten years of prison and ten years of forced labor *in addition*, i.e., a total of twenty years. This scale might seem pessimistic at first: would forced labor really still be necessary after twenty years? But we know that forced labor turned out to be a very long-lived measure, and that even after fifty years it would still be extremely popular.

For many months after the October Revolution the prison personnel everywhere remained Tsarist, and the only new officials named were *Commissars* of prisons. The brazen jailers went so far as to create their own *trade union* ("The Union of Prison Employees") and established an *elective basis* for prison administration! (The only time in all Russian history!) The prisoners were not to be left behind either—they, too, had their own internal self-government. (Circular of the People's Commissariat of Justice, April 24, 1918: prisoners, wherever possible, were to be brought into self-verification and self-supervision.)

4. *Ibid.*, Vol. 54, p. 391.
5. *Ibid.*, Vol. 50, p. 70.

Naturally such a free commune of convicts ("anarchical licentiousness") did not correspond to the needs of the dictatorship of the progressive class and was of sorry help in purging harmful insects from the Russian land. (And what could one expect—if the prison chapels had not been closed, and our Soviet prisoners were willingly going there on Sundays, even if only to pass the time!)

Of course, even the Tsarist jailers were not entirely a loss to the proletariat, for after all theirs was a *profession* important to the most immediate purposes of the Revolution. And therefore it was necessary to "select those persons of the prison administration who have not become totally calloused and stupefied in the patterns of Tsarist prisons [And what does 'not totally' mean? And how would you find that out? Does it mean they had forgotten 'God save the Tsar'?] who can be used for work at the new tasks."[6] (Did they, for example, answer precisely, "Yes, sir!" and "No, sir," or turn the key in the lock quickly?) And, of course, the prison buildings themselves, their cells, their bars and locks, although in appearance they remained exactly as before, in actual fact had acquired a *new class content*, a lofty revolutionary meaning.

And nevertheless, the habit of the courts, right up to the middle of 1918, of keeping right on, out of inertia, sentencing "to prison, to prison," slowed the breakup of the old machinery of state in its prison area.

In the middle of 1918, to be exact on July 6, an event took place whose significance is not grasped by everyone, an event superficially known as the "suppression of the revolt of the Left SR's." But this was, in fact, a coup d'état, of hardly any less significance than October 25. On October 25 the power—the government—of the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies was proclaimed, whence the name *Soviet power*. But in its first months this new government was very much beclouded by the presence in it of other parties besides the Bolsheviks. Although the coalition government consisted only of the Bolsheviks and the Left SR's, nonetheless, in the membership of the All-Russian Congresses (the Second, Third, and Fourth), and of the All-Russian Central Executive Committees (VTsIK's) which they elected, there were still included some representatives of other

6. *Sovetskaya Yustitsiya* (a collection of articles, *Soviet Justice*), Moscow, 1919, p. 20.

socialist parties—SR's, Social Democrats, Anarchists, Popular Socialists, etc. Because of this fact the VTsIK's possessed the unhealthy character of "socialist parliaments." But in the course of the first months of 1918, by a whole series of decisive measures (supported by the Left SR's), the representatives of the other socialist parties were either expelled from VTsIK (by its own decision, an original parliamentary procedure) or else were simply not allowed to be elected to it. The last non-Bolshevik party, which still constituted one-third of the parliament (the Fifth Congress of Soviets), was the Left SR's. And the time finally came to get rid of them too. On July 6, 1918, they were excluded in toto from VTsIK and from the Council of People's Commissars. Thereby the power of the Soviet of Deputies (by tradition called the "Soviet") ceased to stand in opposition to the will of the Bolshevik Party and took the form of the Democracy of a New Type.

Only on this historic day could the reconstruction of the old prison machinery and the creation of the Archipelago really begin.[7]

And the direction of this desired reconstruction had long since been understood. After all, Marx himself had pointed out in his "Critique of the Gotha Program" that productive labor was the only method of prisoner correction. It was clear, of course, as Vyshinsky explained much later on, that what was meant here was "not that kind of work which dries out the mind and the heart of a human being," but "the miracle worker [!] which transforms people from nonexistence and insignificance into heroes."[8] Why is it that our prisoner must not chew the rag or read nice little books in a cell, but must labor instead? Because in the Republic of the Soviets there can be no place for forced idleness, for that "forced parasitism"[9] which could exist in a parasitical society, for example in Schlüsselburg. Such idleness as this on the part of prisoners would have very simply been contrary to the bases of the work structure of the Soviet Republic as defined in the Con-

7. In the clumsily high-flying language of Vyshinsky: "The process, unique in the world, possessing genuine universal historical significance, of creating, on the ruins of the bourgeois system of prisons, those 'houses of the dead' which were built by the exploiters for the workers, of new institutions with new social content." A. Y. Vyshinsky (editor), *Ot Tyurem k Vospitatelnym Uchrezhdeniyam* (*From Prisons to Rehabilitative Institutions*), Moscow, Sovetskoye Zakonodatelstvo Publishing House, 1934, preface.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

stitution of July 10, 1918: "He who does not work does not eat." Consequently, if the prisoners were not set to work, they were, according to the Constitution, to be deprived of their bread ration.

The Central Penal Department of the People's Commissariat of Justice,[10] which had been created in May, 1918, had immediately begun to send off to work the then-existing zeks ("began to organize productive labor"). But this legislation had been proclaimed only after the July coup—to be precise, on July 23, 1918—in "Temporary instructions on deprivation of freedom":[11] "*Those deprived of freedom who are capable of labor must be recruited for physical work on a compulsory basis.*"

One can say that the camps originated and the Archipelago was born from this particular instruction of July 23, 1918 (*nine months* after the October Revolution). (Someone may enter a reproach that this birth was premature?)

The necessity of forced labor by prisoners (which was anyway quite clear for everyone by then) was further clarified at the Seventh All-Union Congress of the Soviets: "Labor is the best means of paralyzing the disintegrating influence . . . of the endless conversations of prisoners among themselves in the course of which the more experienced instruct the newcomers."[12] (Aha, so that's why!)

Soon after that there began the Communist "subbotniki"*—"voluntary Saturdays." And that same People's Commissariat of Justice issued an appeal: "It is essential to teach [the prisoners] to become accustomed to Communist, collective labor."[13] In other words, the spirit of the Communist "subbotniki" was to be applied to the *forced-labor* camps.

And that is how that hasty epoch instantly heaped up a mountain of problems which it took decades to sort out.

The bases of *corrective-labor policy* were included in the Party program at the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (March, 1919). The complete organizational structuring of the camp network throughout Soviet Russia coincided rigidly

10. After the Brest-Litovsk Peace the Left SR's left the government, and the People's Commissariat of Justice was headed by Bolsheviks.

11. These instructions continued to exist during the whole course of the Civil War, right up until November, 1920.

12. *Otchyot N. K. Y. VII Vsesoyuznomu Syezdu Sovetov* (*Report by the People's Commissariat of Justice to the Seventh All-Union Congress of Soviets*), p. 9.

13. *Materialy N. K. Y.* (*Materials of the People's Commissariat of Justice*), Vol. VII, p. 137.

with the first Communist subbotniki (April 12–May 17, 1919): the decrees of VTsIK on camps for forced labor were issued on April 15, 1919, and May 17, 1919.[14] Under their provisions, camps for forced labor were obligatorily created (by the provincial Cheka) in *each provincial capital* (if convenient, within the city limits, or in a monastery or on a nearby country estate) and also *in several counties* as well (although for the time being not in all of them). The camps were required to accommodate *no fewer than three hundred persons* each (in order that the cost of the guard and the administration should be paid for by the prisoners' labor), and they were under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Penal Departments.

The early forced-labor camps seem to us nowadays to be something intangible. The people imprisoned in them seem not to have said anything to anyone—there is no testimony. Literature and memoirs, when they speak of War Communism, recall executions and prisons, but do not have a thing to say about camps. And nowhere, even between the lines, nowhere outside the text, are they implied. So it was natural for Mihajlo Mihajlov to make his mistake. Where were those camps? What were their names? What did they look like?

The Instruction of July 23, 1918, had the decisive fault (noted by all jurists) that nothing was mentioned there about class differentiation among the prisoners, in other words that some prisoners should be maintained in better conditions and some in worse. But it did outline the labor system—and that is the only reason we can get any picture of what they were like. The workday was set at eight hours. Because of the novelty of it all, the hasty decision was made to pay the prisoners for all their work, other than camp maintenance, at 100 percent of the rates of the corresponding trade unions. (Oh, what a monstrous thing! The pen can hardly bear to write it!) (They were being compelled to work by the Constitution, and they were also being paid according to the same Constitution—logical enough!) It is true that the cost of maintenance of the camp and the camp guard was deducted from their wages. For "conscientious" prisoners there was a special benefit: to be allowed to live in a private apartment and to come to the camp for work only. And release ahead of term

14. *Sobraniye Uzakonenii RSFSR za 1919* (*Collection of Legislative Acts of the R.S.F.S.R. for 1919*), No. 12, p. 124, and No. 20, p. 235.

was promised as a reward for "special labor enthusiasm." And in general there were no detailed instructions on the regimen, and every camp had its own. "In the period of building a new governmental system, taking into account the *great overcrowding of places of confinement* [!—my italics—A.S.] there was no time to think about the regimen in the camps. All the attention was being directed to *unburdening the prisons.*"[15] Something like that reads like a hieroglyphic from Babylon. How many questions immediately suggest themselves: What was going on in those wretched prisons? And what were the social causes of such overcrowding? And is one to understand the matter of *unburdening* the prisons to mean executions or dispatching prisoners to camps? And what did it mean by saying it was impossible to give any thought to the regimen in the camps? Did this mean that the People's Commissariat of Justice did not have time to safeguard the prisoner against the arbitrary actions of the local camp chief? Is that the only way this can be read? There were no instructions about the regimen, and in the years of *the Revolutionary Sense of Justice* every petty tyrant could do just as he pleased with the prisoners?

From the meager statistics (all from that very same collection, *Soviet Justice*) we learn: in general the work in camps was menial. In 1919 only 2.5 percent of the prisoners worked in workshops, and in 1920 only 10 percent. It is also known that at the end of 1918 the Central Penal Department* (what a moniker—it makes the flesh creep!) sought the establishment of agricultural colonies. It is known that in Moscow several brigades made up of prisoners were established to carry out repairs on water pipes, heating systems, and plumbing in nationalized buildings. (And these apparently unescorted prisoners wandered about with monkey wrenches, soldering irons, and pipes through the corridors of government organizations and institutions, in the apartments of the bigwigs of those times, summoned by their wives by telephone to carry out repairs—and were never mentioned in any memoir, in any play, or in any film.)

But the forced-labor camps were nonetheless not the *first* camps in the R.S.F.S.R.

15. *Materialy N. K. Y., 1920,* Vol. VII.

The reader has already read the term concentration camp—"kontslager"—several times in the sentences of the tribunals (Part I, Chapter 8) and concluded, perhaps, that we were guilty of an error, of making careless use of terminology subsequently developed? No, this is not the case.

In August, 1918, several days before the attempt on his life by Fanya Kaplan, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin wrote in a telegram to Yevgeniya Bosh[16] and to the Penza Provincial Executive Committee (they were unable to cope with a peasant revolt): "Lock up all the doubtful ones [not "guilty," mind you, but *doubtful*—A.S.] in *a concentration camp* outside the city."[17] (And in addition "carry out merciless mass terror"—this was before the decree.)

Only on September 5, 1918, ten days after this telegram, was the Decree on the Red Terror published, which was signed by Petrovsky, Kursky, and Bonch-Bruyevich. In addition to the instructions on mass executions, it stated in particular: "Secure the Soviet Republic against its class enemies by isolating them in *concentration camps*."[18]

So that is *where* this term—*concentration camps*—was discovered and immediately seized upon and confirmed—one of the principal terms of the twentieth century, and it was to have a big international future! And this is *when* it was born—in August and September, 1918. The word itself had already been used during World War I, but in relation to POW's and undesirable foreigners. But here in 1918 it was for the first time applied to the citizens of one's own country. The switch in meaning is easily comprehended: concentration camps for POW's were not prisons but a necessary precautionary concentration of the POW's. And so, too, for doubtful compatriots extrajudicial precautionary concentration was now proposed. For an energetic mind which could visualize barbed wire surrounding prisoners who had not been tried, the necessary term was right at hand—concentration camps.

And while the forced-labor camps of the People's Commissariat of Justice belonged to the category of *general places of*

16. To this now forgotten woman was entrusted at this time—via the line of authority of the Central Committee of the Party and of the Cheka as well—the fate of all Penza Province.

17. Lenin, fifth edition, Vol. 50, pp. 143–144.

18. *Sobraniye Uzakonenii za 1918* (*Collection of Legislative Acts for 1918*), No. 65, p. 710.

confinement, the concentration camps were in no sense "general places," but were under the direct administration of the Cheka and were maintained for *particularly hostile* elements and for *hostages*. True, in the future, prisoners would be sent to concentration camps by tribunals as well; but people never tried kept pouring in automatically, sent there only *on the basis of hostility*.[19] For escape from a concentration camp the sentence was multiplied by *ten*—also without trial. (This was in tune with the times: "Ten for one!" "One hundred for one!") Consequently, if a prisoner had a five-year sentence and escaped and was caught, then his sentence was automatically extended to 1968. For a second escape from a concentration camp, execution was prescribed (and, of course, was punctiliously carried out).

In the Ukraine, concentration camps were created somewhat later—in 1920.

But the creative thinking of our young Soviet justice did not content itself with this. Very shortly, even the concentration camps, which would seem to have had a firm class foundation, came to be considered insufficiently severe, insufficiently purposeful. In 1921 the Northern Special Purpose Camps were founded (not for nothing was that label, *special*, attached to them). They had as their acronym SLON.* The first such camps arose in Pertominsk, Kholmogory, and just outside Archangel itself.[20] However, these places were evidently considered difficult to guard and unsuitable for large concentrations of prisoners. And the gaze of the higher-ups naturally fell on the nearby Solovetsky Islands ("Solovki"), with their already built-up establishments, and their stone buildings, located twelve to twenty-five miles from the mainland, sufficiently close for the jailers, and sufficiently distant to discourage escapees, with no communication with the mainland for half the year—a harder nut to crack than Sakhalin.

And once Solovki had been selected and established, recollections of the forced-labor camps, the concentration camps, and the

19. Vyshinsky, *op. cit.*

20. The magazine *Solovetskiye Ostrova* (*The Solovetsky Islands*), 1930, No. 2–3, p. 55. From the report of the Chief of Administration of SLON, Comrade Nogtev, in Kem. When nowadays tourists are shown the so-called "Camp of the Government of Chaikovsky," at the mouth of the Dvina River, one would have to be in the know to realize that this was one of the first Northern "Special Purpose Camps."

Special Purpose Camps vanished from the popular mind! Because Solovki was not kept secret in the twenties, and in actual fact ears buzzed with Solovki. They openly used "Solovki" to scare people with. They were publicly proud of Solovki. (They had the brass to be proud of it!) Solovki was even a symbol. There were as many jokes about it in vaudeville acts as you can imagine. After all, classes had already disappeared (whither?), and Solovki itself was soon to come to an end. Subscriptions to the internal camp magazine, *The Solovetsky Islands*, were boldly sold throughout the Soviet Union.

But the camp rootlets went deeper, deeper, and it is simply that we have lost count of their places and traces. There is no one now to tell us about most of those first concentration camps. And only from the last testimony of those few surviving first concentration camp inmates can we glean and preserve a little bit.

At that time the authorities used to love to set up their concentration camps in former monasteries: they were enclosed by strong walls, had good solid buildings, and they were empty. (After all, monks are not human beings and could be tossed out at will.) Thus in Moscow there were concentration camps in Andronnikov, Novospassky, and Ivanovsky monasteries. In the Petrograd *Krasnaya Gazeta* of September 6, 1918, we can read that the first concentration camp "will be set up in Nizhni Novgorod in an empty nunnery. . . . And *initially* it is planned to send five thousand persons to the concentration camp in Nizhni Novgorod." (My italics—A.S.)

In Ryazan the concentration camp was also set up in a former nunnery (Kazansky). And here is what they say about it. Imprisoned there were merchants, priests, and so-called "war prisoners" (as they called captured officers who had not served in the Red Army). But there was also another segment of the prisoner population which fitted into no simple category. (For example, the Tolstoyan I. Y——v, whose trial we have already read about, was kept here.) Attached to the camp were workshops—a weaving shop, a tailor shop, a shoemaker's shop—and there was also repair and construction work in the city—"general work"* (in 1921 they were already calling it that). To this the prisoners were taken by convoy, but those who worked as individual craftsmen, because of the kind of work they did, were al-

lowed to go without convoy, and the citizens fed the latter in their homes. The population of Ryazan was very sympathetic toward the *deprivees*, as they were called. (Officially they were called not prisoners but "persons deprived of freedom.") A passing column of them would be given alms (rusks, boiled beets, potatoes), and the convoy guards did not try to prevent their accepting such gifts, and the deprivees divided everything equally among themselves. (At every step—customs *not ours*, ideology *not ours*.) Those deprivees who were especially fortunate got positions in their specialized fields in institutions (for example, Y——v, on the railroad). They then received passes which permitted them to walk around the city (but they spent the night in camp).

Here is how they fed them in a camp in 1921: half a pound of bread (plus another half-pound for those who fulfilled the norm), hot water for tea morning and evening, and, during the day, a ladle of gruel (with several dozen grains and some potato peelings in it).

Camp life was embellished on the one hand by the denunciations of provocateurs (and arrests on the basis of the denunciations), and on the other by a dramatics and glee club. They gave concerts for the people of Ryazan in the hall of the former noblemen's assembly, and the deprivees' brass band played in the city park. The deprivees got better and better acquainted with and more friendly with the inhabitants, and this became intolerable—and at that point they began to send the so-called "war prisoners" to the Northern Special Purpose Camps.

The lesson of the instability and laxity in these concentration camps lay in their being surrounded by civilian life. And that was why the special northern camps were required. (Concentration camps were abolished in 1922.)

This whole dawn of the camps deserves to have its spectrum examined much more closely. And glory to he who can—for all I have in my own hands is crumbs.

At the end of the Civil War the two labor armies created by Trotsky had to be dissolved because of the grumbling of the soldiers kept in them. And by this token, the role of camps in the structure of the R.S.F.S.R. not only did not diminish but intensified. By the end of 1920 in the R.S.F.S.R. there were eighty-four

camps in forty-three provinces.[21] If one believes the official statistics (even though classified), 25,336 persons and in addition 24,400 "prisoners of war of the Civil War" were held in them at this time.[22] Both figures, particularly the second, seem to be understated. However, if one takes into consideration that by *unloading prisons*, sinking barges, and other types of mass annihilation the figure had often begun with zero and been reduced to zero over and over, then perhaps these figures are accurate.

According to the same source, by October, 1923, at the beginning of the cloudless years of NEP (and quite a long time before the *personality cult*), there were being held: in 355 camps —68,297 persons deprived of freedom; in 207 reformatories—48,163; in 105 homes for confinement and prisons—16,765; in 35 agricultural colonies—2,328, and another 1,041 minors and sick persons.[23]

And there is another expressive figure: on the overcrowding of camps (for the numbers of those imprisoned grew more swiftly than the organization of camps). For each one hundred accommodations for prisoners there were: in 1924—112 prisoners; in 1925—120; in 1926—132; and in 1927—177.[24] Whoever has *done time* there knows well what camp life was like (in terms of places on bunks, bowls in the mess hall, or padded jackets)—if there were 1.77 prisoners for each allotted place.

Year after year other forms of existence for prisoners were also tried, in a search for something better: for those who were not dangerous and not politically hostile there were labor colonies, corrective-labor homes (from 1922), reformatories (from 1923), homes for confinement, labor homes (from 1924), labor homes for juvenile offenders; and for politically hostile prisoners there were detention prisons (from 1922), and from 1923 on Special Purpose Isolators (the former "Centrals" and the future Special Purpose Prisons or TON's).

The creators of these forms saw in them a bold "struggle against making a fetish of prisons" common to all other countries

21. Tsentralnyi Gosudarstvenny Arkhiv Oktyabrskoi Revolyutsii (Central State Archives of the October Revolution) (henceforth TsGAOR), collection 393, shelf 13, file IB, sheet 111.

22. *Ibid.*, sheet 112.

23. *Ibid.*, shelf 39, file 48, sheets 13, 14.

24. A. A. Gertsenzon, *Borba s Prestupnosttyu v RSFSR* (*Struggle Against Crime in the R.S.F.S.R.*), Moscow, Juridical Publishing House, 1928, p. 103.

of the world, including the former Russia, where nobody could think up anything at all except prisons and more prisons. ("The Tsarist government, which had transformed the entire country into one enormous prison, had developed its prison system with some kind of particularly refined sadism.")[25]

On the threshold of the "reconstruction period" (meaning from 1927) "the role of camps *was growing* [Now just what was one to think? Now after all the victories?]—against the most dangerous, hostile elements, wreckers, the kulaks, counterrevolutionary propaganda."[26]

And so it was that the Archipelago was not about to disappear into the depths of the sea! The Archipelago would live!

Until 1924 there were very few ordinary labor colonies in the Archipelago. In those years *closed places* of confinement were predominant, and they would not grow less later on. (In his report of 1924 Krylenko demanded that the number of Special Purpose Isolators be *increased*—isolators for nonworkers and for *especially dangerous persons among the workers* (in which category, evidently, Krylenko himself would turn up later on). (This, his formulation, became a part of the Corrective Labor Code of 1924.)

Just as in the creation of every archipelago invisible shifts take place somewhere in important supporting strata before the picture of the world emerges before us—so here, too, very important shifts and changes in names took place which are now nearly incomprehensible to our minds.

At the very beginning there was primeval chaos, and places of imprisonment were under the jurisdiction of three different institutions: the Cheka (Comrade Dzerzhinsky), the NKVD (Comrade Petrovsky), and the People's Commissariat of Justice (Comrade Kursky). In the NKVD at first there was GUMZak (the Chief Administration for Places of Imprisonment, immediately after October, 1917), and then GUPR (the Chief Administration for Forced Labor), and then once again GUMZ.[27] In the People's Commissariat of Justice there was the Prison Administration (December, 1917), then the Central Penal Department

25. Vyshinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 431.
26. I. L. Averbakh, *Ot Prestupleniya k Trudu* (*From Crime to Labor*), edited by Vyshinsky, Soviet Legislation Publishers, 1936.
27. Just as it is today, in the sixties.

(May, 1918) with a network of Provincial Penal Departments and even congresses of them (September, 1920), and this was then made to sound better as the Central Corrective Labor Department (1921). It goes without saying that such dispersal was to the disadvantage of the punitive-corrective business, and Dzerzhinsky sought the unification of administrations. And as it happened, at this point a little-noticed merging of the Cheka into the NKVD took place: after March 16, 1919, Dzerzhinsky became the Commissar of Internal Affairs as well. And by 1922, he had also succeeded in transferring all places of imprisonment from the People's Commissariat of Justice to himself in the NKVD (June 25, 1922).[28] And thus GUMZ of the NKVD kept ever expanding.

Parallel to this took place the reorganization of the camp guards. First these were the armies of the VOKhR (the Internal Guard Service of the Republic), and then VNUS (the Internal Service). And in 1919 they were merged into the Corps of the Cheka,[29] and Dzerzhinsky became the chairman of their Military Council as well. (Nonetheless, nonetheless, up until 1924 there were complaints about the numerous escapes, the low state of discipline among the personnel[30]—probably there were drunkenness and carelessness—their only interest lay in getting their wages.) And it was only in June, 1924, that, by decree of VTsIK and the Council of People's Commissars, military discipline was introduced into the corps of convoy* guards and recruitment of them through the People's Commissariat for the Army and Navy was inaugurated.[31]

And furthermore, parallel to this, a Central Bureau of Dactyloscopic Registration and a Central Breeding Establishment for Service and Tracking Dogs were created in 1922.

But at this same time GUMZak of the U.S.S.R. was renamed GUITU (Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Institutions) of the U.S.S.R., and then was renamed again—GUITL of the OGPU (the Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps), and its chief simultaneously became the Chief of Convoy Troops of the U.S.S.R.

28. The magazine *Vlast Sovetov* (*The Power of the Soviets*), 1923, No. 1–2, p. 57.
29. *Ibid.*, 1919, No. 11, pp. 6–7.
30. TsGAOR, collection 393, shelf 47, file 89, sheet 11.
31. *Ibid.*, collection 393, shelf 53, file 141, sheets 1, 3, 4.

And how much excitement there was! And how many of those stairs, offices, guards, passes, rubber stamps, seals, and signs there were!

And from GUITL, the son of GUMZak, derived our own Gulag.

Chapter 2

■

The Archipelago Rises from the Sea

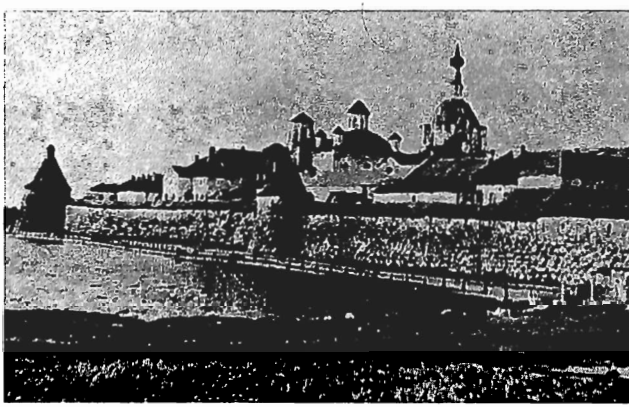
On the White Sea, where the nights are white for half a year at a time, Bolshoi Solovetsky Island lifts its white churches from the water within the ring of its bouldered kremlin* walls, rusty-red from the lichens which have struck root there—and the grayish-white Solovetsky seagulls hover continually over the kremlin and screech.

"In all this brightness it is as if there were no sin present. . . . It is as if nature here had not yet matured to the point of sin" is how the writer Prishvin perceived the Solovetsky Islands.[1]

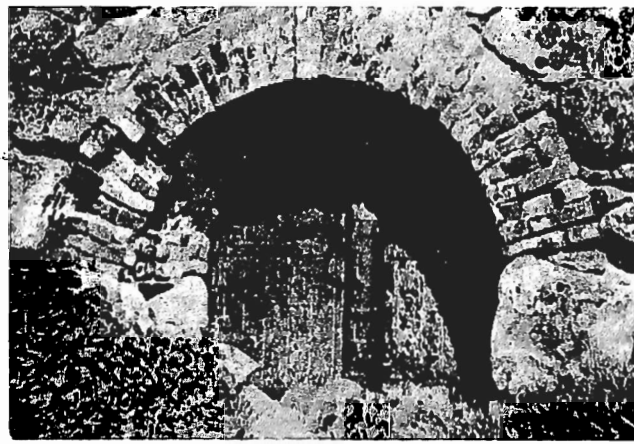
Without us these isles rose from the sea; without us they acquired a couple of hundred lakes replete with fish; without our help they were settled by capercaillies,* hares, and deer, while foxes, wolves, and other beasts of prey never ever appeared there.

The glaciers came and went, the granite boulders littered the shores of the lakes; the lakes froze during the Solovetsky winter

1: And to Prishvin only the monks themselves seemed sinful in the context of Solovki. It was 1908, and in accordance with the liberal concepts of the times it was quite impossible to say an approving word about the clergy. And yet to us, who have survived the Archipelago, those monks certainly seem angels. Though having every opportunity of eating their bellies full, they, in the Golgotha-Crucifixion Monastery, permitted themselves fish, itself a fast dish, only on the great holidays. Despite the opportunity to sleep whenever they pleased, they kept vigil nights on end, and (in that same small monastery) day long, year long, and in perpetuity read the Psalter around the clock and prayed for all Orthodox Christians, living and dead.



1. The Solovetsky kremlin



2. The Herring Gates

nights, the sea howled under the wind and was covered with an icy sludge and in places froze; the northern lights blazed across half the sky; and it grew bright once again and warm once again, and the fir trees grew and thickened, and the birds cackled and called, and the young deer trumpeted—and the planet circled through all world history, and kingdoms fell and rose, and here there were still no beasts of prey and no human being.

Sometimes the men of Novgorod landed there and they counted the islands as belonging to their Obonezhskaya "pyatina."* Karelians lived there too. Half a hundred years after the Battle of Kulikovo Field and half a thousand years before the GPU, the monks Savvaty and German crossed the mother-of-pearl sea in a tiny boat and came to look on this island without a beast of prey as sacred. The Solovetsky Monastery began with them. After that the cathedrals of the Assumption and of the Transfiguration arose (Illustration No. 1: a general view of the Solovetsky kremlin from the direction of Svyatoye [Holy] Lake), the Church of the Beheading on Sekirnaya Hill (Illustration No. 3), and another score of churches, and another score of bell towers, and the smaller monasteries of Golgotha, the Trinity, Savvatyevsky, and Muksalmsky, and solitary retreats of hermits and ascetics in the remote locations. The labor of many went into the creation of all this—first of the monks themselves and subsequently of the peasants belonging to the monastery. The lakes were joined by dozens of canals. Lake water was delivered to the monastery by wooden pipes. And the most surprising thing of all was a dike at Muksalma (nineteenth century) made from "immovable" boulders somehow set in place on the sand spits. On Large and Small Muksalma fat herds began to pasture. The monks loved to tend animals, both tame and wild. The Solovetsky land turned out to be not only holy but rich too, capable of feeding many thousands.[2] In the vegetable gardens they raised plump, firm, sweet white cabbages (the stalks were called "Solovetsky apples"). All their vegetables were their own. And all of them were of the best quality. And they had their own greenhouses for

2. Specialists in the history of technology say that back in the sixteenth century Filipp-Kolychev (who had raised his voice against Ivan the Terrible) introduced a system of agricultural technology at Solovki that even three centuries later would have been respectable anywhere.

flowers, where they even raised roses. They developed fisheries—catch from the sea and from the "Metropolitan's fishponds" dammed off from the sea. In the course of centuries and decades they acquired their own mills to mill their own grain, their own sawmills, their own dishware made in their own pottery works, their own foundry, their own smithy, their own bindery, their own leather shop, their own carriage shop, and even their own electric power station. Even their elaborately shaped bricks and their seagoing boats for their own use—they made all themselves.

However, no development ever took place in the past, nor takes place in the present—and it isn't clear that it will ever take place in the future—without being accompanied by military thought and prison thought.

Military thought: It was impermissible for some sort of feckless monks just to live on just an island. The island was on the borders of the Great Empire, and, consequently, it was required to fight with the Swedes, the Danes, the English, and, consequently, it was required to build a fortress with walls eight yards thick and to raise up eight towers on the walls, and to make narrow embrasures in them, and to provide for a vigilant watch from the cathedral bell tower.[3]

Prison thought: How glorious—good stone walls standing on a separate island! What a good place to confine important criminals—and with someone already there to provide guard. We won't interfere with their saving their souls: just guard our prisoners![4]

Had Savvaty thought about that when he landed on the holy island?

They imprisoned church heretics here and political heretics as well. For example, Avraami Palitsyn was imprisoned here (he died here); and Pushkin's uncle, P. Gannibal—for his support of the Decembrists. And the last ataman of the Zaporozhe Cossacks, Kolnyshevsky (a distant predecessor of Petlyura?), when

3. And the monastery did have to defend itself against the English in 1808 and in 1854, and emerged unconquered; and in the conflict with the supporters of the Patriarch Nikon in 1667 the monk Feoktist opened a secret entrance and betrayed the Solovetsky kremlin to a boyar of the Tsar.

4. How much of humanity's faith was destroyed by this double duty of Christian monasteries as prisons!

he was already a very old man, was imprisoned here, and he was over a hundred years old when he was released after serving a long term.[5]

Incidentally, the ancient history of the Solovetsky monastery prison was the victim of a fashionable myth, disseminated only in Soviet times, during the period of the Soviet prison camp on Solovki, which deceived the writers of guidebooks and historical descriptions—and nowadays one can read in several books that the Solovetsky prison was a torture prison, that it had hooks for the rack, and lashes, and torture with fire. But all these were the appurtenances of interrogation prisons in the era before Empress Elizabeth, or of the Western Inquisition, and were not at all typical of Russian monastery dungeons in general, and were dreamed up here by an unscrupulous and also ignorant investigator.

The old Solovetsky Island people remember him very well. It was the *joker* Ivanov, who bore the camp nickname of the "antireligious germ." Formerly he had been a lay brother attached to the Novgorod Archbishopric, arrested for selling church valuables to the Swedes. He got to Solovki in 1925 and hustled about to escape general work and death. He had made antireligious propaganda among the prisoners his specialty, and of course became a collaborator of the ISCh (the Information and Investigation Section—which was named very candidly!). But in addition he excited the heads of the camp with his suggestions that many treasures had been buried here by the monks—and so they created a Commission for Excavations under his leadership. This commission kept on digging many months. But, alas, the monks had cheated the psychological calculations of the "antireligious germ": they had buried no treasures on Solovki. At this point, to get out of the situation with honor, Ivanov went around explaining the underground workshops, storehouse, and defense installations as prison and torture facilities. The torture instruments naturally could not be preserved so many centuries,

5. The state prison in Solovki existed from 1718 on. Visiting Solovki in the eighties of the nineteenth century, the Commander of the Armies of the St. Petersburg Military District, Grand Duke Vladimir Aleksandrovich, found the military garrison there superfluous and *he removed all the soldiers from Solovki.* In 1903 the Solovetsky prison ceased to exist. (A. S. Prugavin, *Monastyrskiye Tyurmy* [*Monastery Prisons*], Posrednik Publishers, pp. 78, 81.)

but the hooks of course (for hanging up carcasses) were evidence that there had been a rack here. It was more difficult to provide a basis for the finding that no trace of nineteenth-century torture had survived—so the conclusion was reached that "during the past century the regime in the Solovetsky prison had been significantly relaxed." The "discoveries" of the "antireligious germ" had come right at the most appropriate time, had in some degree reassured the disappointed administration, and were published in *The Solovetsky Islands* and subsequently as a monograph in the Solovetsky printing shop—and by this means successfully muddied the waters of historical truth. (This whole intrigue was judged all the more appropriate because the flourishing Solovetsky Monastery had been very famous and respected in all Russia up to the time of the Revolution.)

But when power passed into the hands of the workers, what was to be done with these malevolent parasitical monks? They sent Commissars, socially tried-and-true leaders, and they proclaimed the monastery a state farm, and ordered the monks to pray less and to work harder for the benefit of the workers and peasants. The monks worked, and their herring, which was astonishing in its flavor, and which they had been able to catch because of their special knowledge of where and when to cast nets, was shipped off to Moscow to be used for the Kremlin tables.

However, the abundance of valuables concentrated in the monastery, especially in the sacristy, troubled some of the leaders and overseers who had arrived there: instead of passing into the workers' hands (i.e., *their own*), these valuables lay there as a dead religious burden. And at that point, contradicting to a certain degree the Criminal Code but corresponding in a very genuine way with the general spirit of expropriation of the property of nonworkers, the monastery was set on fire (on May 25, 1923); the buildings were damaged, and many valuables disappeared from the sacristy; and, the principal thing, all the inventory records burned up, and it was quite impossible to determine how much and exactly what had disappeared.[6]

But without even conducting an investigation, what is our revolutionary sense of justice (sense of smell) going to hint to

6. And the *antireligious "germ"* also referred to this fire, explaining the difficulty in finding nowadays material proofs of the former prison cells and torture apparatus.

us? Who if not the black gang of monks themselves could have been to blame for the arson of the monastery wealth? So throw them out onto the mainland, and concentrate all the Northern Special Purpose Camps on the Solovetsky Islands! The eighty-year-old and even hundred-year-old monks begged on their knees to be allowed to die on the "holy soil," but they were all thrown out with proletarian ruthlessness except for the most necessary among them: the artels of fishermen;[7] the cattle specialists on Muksalma; Father Methodius, the cabbage salter; Father Samson, the foundry specialist; yes, and other such useful fathers as well. (They were allotted a corner of the kremlin separate from the camp, with their own exit—the Herring Gates [Illustration No. 2]. They were christened *a Workers' Commune*, but out of condescension for their total stupefaction they were left for their prayers the Onufriyev Church at the cemetery.)

And that is how one of the favorite sayings constantly repeated by the prisoners came true: A holy place is never empty. The chimes of bells fell silent, the icon lamps and the candle stands fell dark, the liturgies and the vespers resounded no longer; psalms were no longer chanted around the clock, the iconostases were wrecked (though they left the one in the Cathedral of the Transfiguration)—but on the other hand courageous Chekists, in overcoats with superlong flaps which reached all the way down to the heels, and particularly distinctive black Solovetsky cuffs and lapels and black-edged service caps without stars, arrived there in June, 1923, to set up a model camp, a model of severity, the pride of the workers' and peasants' Republic.

Whatever *Special Purpose* might mean had not yet been formulated and set forth in instructions. But they had of course explained this orally at the Lubyanka to the chief of the Solovetsky Camp, Eichmans. And he, on arriving at the islands himself, had explained it to his closest assistants.

■

Nowadays you could not astonish former zeks or even just plain people of the sixties with the story of Solovki. But just let

7. They removed the fishermen from Solovki about 1930—and from that date on, the herring catches came to an end: no one could manage to find that particular herring in the sea any more, and it was as if it had completely disappeared.

the reader imagine to himself, if he will, a person of Chekhov's and post-Chekhov Russia, a person of the Silver Age of our culture, as they called the decade after 1910, brought up *then*, a bit shaken up by the Civil War no doubt, but nonetheless accustomed to the kind of food, clothing, and mutual verbal communication customary among human beings—and then and there he enters the gates of Solovki—Kemperpunkt, the Kem Transit Camp.[8] This transit camp in Kem was barren, without a tree or bush, Popov Island, joined to the mainland by a dike. And the first thing he would see in that naked, dirty pen would be a quarantine company (for they organized the prisoners there in "companies"—they had not yet discovered the "brigade") dressed *in sacks*. Just ordinary sacks: the legs stuck out down below as if from under a skirt, and there were holes for head and arms (impossible to imagine something like that, but what is there that our Russian ingenuity cannot overcome!). This sack the newcomer would avoid as long as he had his own clothes, but before he had even managed to examine those sacks well, he would see the legendary Captain Kurilko.

Kurilko (or Beloborodov, interchangeable with him) also came out to the prisoner transport column in a long Chekist overcoat with those frightening black cuffs which looked so utterly outlandish against the background of the old Russian khaki—like a herald of death. He jumped up on a barrel or some other suitable elevation, and he spoke to the new arrivals with unexpectedly strident rage: "Hey! Attention! Here the republic is not So-viets-ka-ya but Solovets-ka-ya! Get this straight—no prosecutor has ever set foot on Solovetsky soil! And none ever will! Learn one thing! You have *not* been sent here for correction! You can't straighten out a hunchback! The system here will be this: When I say, 'Stand up,' you stand up; when I say, 'Lie down,' you lie down! Your letters home are going to read like this: I'm alive, healthy, and satisfied with everything! Period!"

Struck dumb with astonishment, famous noblemen, intellectuals from the capital, priests, mullahs, and dark Central Asians listened to him and heard such things as had never before been heard or seen or read. And Kurilko, who had never

8. In Finnish this place is called Vegeraksha, i.e., "The Habitation of Witches."

made a splash during the Civil War, but who now, by this particular historical method, was writing his name in the chronicle of all Russia, got more and more worked up by each successful shout and turn of phrase, and kept formulating and spontaneously sharpening up still other, new ones.

And so, vainglorious and in full cry (and thinking maliciously inside himself: You prisoners, where were you hiding when we were fighting against the Bolsheviks? You thought you could sit the whole thing out in your nooks and crannies? And now they've dragged you here! So that's for your shitty neutrality! And I'm friends with the Bolsheviks, we are people of deeds!), Kurilko would begin his exercises:

"Hello, First Quarantine Company! . . . That's bad, it's not loud enough, once more! Hello, First Quarantine Company! . . . That's not loud enough! . . . You have got to shout 'Hello' so loud that they can hear you over there on Solovki, across the bay! When two hundred men shout, the walls have got to fall down! Once again! Hello, First Quarantine Company!"

Making sure that everyone was shouting at the top of his lungs and was ready to fall in his tracks, exhausted by shouting, Kurilko began his new exercise—the quarantine company was to run around a post:

"Legs higher! Legs higher!"

He was having hard going himself by now—like a tragedian before the final murder in the fifth act. And in the last hoarse croak of his half-hour of instruction, as a confession of the essence of Solovki, he promised those falling and those fallen, already prostrate on the ground: "I'll make you suck the snot from corpses!"

And that was just the first training session, intended to break the will of the newly arrived prisoners. And in the black, wooden, rotten, stinking barracks they would be ordered "to sleep on their sides"—which wasn't so bad either, because that was for those prisoners whom *the squad leaders* would squeeze onto the bunks —for a bribe. And all the rest would *stand* between the bunks all night (and anyone guilty of an offense would be set to stand, furthermore, between the latrine barrel and the wall).

And these were the blessed years of 1923 and 1925, before the great turning point, before the personality cult, before the

distortions, before the violations. (And from 1927 on there was this in addition—that urki, thieves, would already be lying there on the bunks and snapping the lice off themselves into the midst of the standing intellectuals.)

While waiting for the steamship *Gleb Boky*,[9] they worked at the Kem Transit Camp, and some of them might be compelled to run around the post hollering incessantly: "I'm a sponger, I don't want to work, and I get in the way of others!" And an engineer who fell off the latrine barrel and spilled it on himself was not allowed in the barracks and was left outside to freeze in all his sewage. And sometimes the convoy would shout: "No laggards in the group! The convoy shoots without warning! Forward march!" And then, sliding the bolts of their rifles into position: "You trying to bug us?" And in the winter they would chase them out on the ice on foot, forcing them to drag the boats behind them and row across patches of water, and then in open water they would load them into the steamship's hold and shove so many in that before getting to Solovki several of them would certainly die—without ever seeing the snowy-white monastery inside the brown walls.

In his very first Solovetsky hours the newcomer might well experience the Solovetsky reception bath trick: He has already undressed, and the first bath attendant dips a swab into a cask of green soap and swabs the newcomer; the second one boots him somewhere down below, down an inclined board or a flight of stairs; down there a third bath attendant lets him, still confused, have a whole bucketful; and a fourth right off shoves him out into the dressing room, where his "rags" have already been tossed down from above however they happen to land. (In this joke one can foresee all Gulag! Both its tempo and the price of a human being.)

And that is how the newcomer swallowed the Solovetsky spirit! A spirit still unknown in the country as a whole, but which repre-

9. Named in honor of the Chairman of the Moscow Troika of the OGPU, a young man who never finished his studies:

"He was a student, he was a mining student,
But passing marks* just never came."

(This was a "friendly epigram" which appeared in the magazine *Solovetskiye Ostrova*, No. 1, 1929. The censor was stupid, and he didn't understand what he had passed.)

sented the future spirit of the Archipelago created at Solovki.

And here, too, the newcomer would see people in sacks; and also in ordinary "free" clothing, new on some and tattered on others; and in the special Solovetsky short pea jackets made from coat material (this was a privilege; this was a sign of high position; that was how the camp administrative personnel dressed), with the so-called "Solovchanki," caps made from the same kind of cloth; and suddenly you would see a person walking about among the prisoners in formal tail coat, and no one was surprised, no one turned around to look at him and laugh. (After all, everyone came wearing what was his own. This poor chap had been arrested in the Metropole Restaurant* and so there he was, slogging out his sentence in his tail coat.)

The magazine *The Solovetsky Islands* (1930, No. 1) declared it was the "dream of many prisoners" to receive standard clothing.[10]

Only the children's colony was completely dressed. And the women, for example, were given neither underwear nor stockings nor even kerchiefs to cover their heads. They had grabbed the old biddy in a summer dress; she just had to go on wearing it the whole Arctic winter. Because of this many prisoners remained in their company quarters in nothing but their underwear, and no one chased them out to work.

Government-issue clothing was so precious that no one on Solovki found the following scene either astonishing or weird: In the middle of winter a prisoner undressed and took his shoes off near the kremlin, then carefully handed in his uniform and ran naked for two hundred yards to another group of people, where he was given clothes to put on. This meant that he was being transferred from the kremlin administration to the administration of the Filimonovo Branch Railroad[11]—but if he had been transferred wearing clothes, those taking him over might

10. All values turn upside down with the years, and what was considered a privilege in the Special Purpose Camp of the twenties—to wear government-issue clothing—would become an annoyance in the Special Camp of the forties; there the privilege would be *not* to wear government-issue clothing, but to wear at least something of one's own, even just a cap. The reason here was not economic only but was a cry of the whole epoch: one decade saw as its ideal how to join in the common lot, and the other how to get away from it.

11. They had dragged the railroad from Staraya Russa to Novgorod all the way over here.

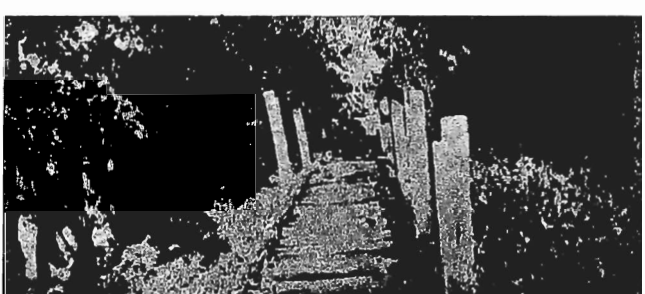
not have returned the clothes or have cheated by switching them.

And here is another winter scene—the same customs, though the reason is different. The Medical Section infirmary is found to be infectious, and orders are issued to scald it down and wash it out with boiling water. But where are the sick prisoners to be put in the meanwhile? All the kremlin accommodations are overcrowded, the density of the population of the Solovetsky Archipelago is greater than that of Belgium—so what must it be like in the Solovetsky kremlin? And therefore all the sick prisoners are carried out on blankets and laid out on the snow for three hours. When they have washed out the infirmary, they haul the patients in again.

We have not forgotten, I hope, that our newcomer is a child of the Silver Age? He knows nothing of the Second World War or of Buchenwald! What he sees is this: *The squad leaders* in khaki pea jackets, stiffly erect, greet one another and the company leaders with salutes, and then they drive their workers out with long clubs—with *staves* (and there is even a special verb, which everyone understands, meaning "*to stave*"). He sees that sledges and carts are drawn not by horses but by men (several harnessed into one rig)—and there is also another word, *VRIDLO* (an acronym meaning a "Temporary Replacement for a Horse").

And from other Solovetsky inhabitants he learns things more awful than his eyes perceive. People pronounce the fatal word "*Sekirka*" to him. This means Sekirnaya Hill. Punishment cells were set up in the two-story cathedral there. And here is how they kept prisoners in the punishment cells: Poles the thickness of an arm were set from wall to wall and prisoners were ordered to sit on these poles all day. (At night they lay on the floor, one on top of another, because it was overcrowded.) The height of the poles was set so that one's feet could not reach the ground. And it was not so easy to keep balance. In fact, the prisoner spent the entire day just trying to maintain his perch. If he fell, the jailers jumped in and beat him. Or else they took him outside to a flight of stairs consisting of 365 steep steps (from the cathedral to the lake, just as the monks had built it) (Illustration No. 4: the view up Sekirnaya Hill as it is today). They tied the person lengthwise to a "balan" (a beam), for the added weight,

3. Church of the Beheading on Sekirnaya Hill



4. Steps up Sekirnaya Hill

and rolled him down (and there wasn't even one landing, and the steps were so steep that the log with the human being on it would go all the way down without stopping).

Well, after all, for *poles* you didn't have to go to Sekirka. They were right there in the kremlin punishment block, which was always overcrowded. Or they might put the prisoners on a sharp-edged boulder on which one could not stay long either. Or, in summer, "on the stump," which meant naked among the mosquitoes. But in that event one had to keep an eye on the culprit; whereas if he was bound naked to a tree, the mosquitoes would look after things themselves. And then they could put whole companies out in the snow for disobedience. Or they might drive a person into the marsh muck up to his neck and keep him there. And then there was another way: to hitch up a horse in empty shafts and fasten the culprit's legs to the shafts; then the guard mounted the horse and kept on driving the horse through a forest cut until the groans and the cries from behind simply came to an end.

Before even beginning his life on Solovki the novice was oppressed in his spirit simply by the fact of his endless three-year term. But the contemporary reader would be much too hasty if he concluded that this was an open and aboveboard system of destruction, of death camps! Oh, no, we are not so simple! In that first experimental camp, as in others afterward, and in the most comprehensive of them all, we never act openly. It is all mixed up, layer upon layer. And that is why it is so long-lasting and so successful.

All of a sudden through the kremlin gates rode some daredevil astride a goat. He bore himself with importance and no one laughed at him. Who was it and why was he on a goat? This was Degtyaryov. In the past he had been a cowboy.[12] He had asked for a horse, but there were few horses on Solovki, so they gave him a goat. What had he done to deserve the honor? Because he had been a cowboy? No, not at all, because he was the manager of the Dendrological Nursery. He grew exotic trees. Here on Solovki.

12. Not to be confused with the free Degtyaryov, the Chief of Troops of the Solovetsky Archipelago.

And so it was that from this horseman on a goat there arose a Solovetsky fantasy. Why should there be exotic trees on Solovki, where even the simple and reasonable vegetable economy of the monks had been destroyed, and where the vegetables were running out? Well, they were there because exotic trees at the Arctic Circle meant that Solovki, like the entire Soviet Republic, was remaking the world and building a new life. But where did the seeds and the funds come from? That's exactly the point: there was money for seeds for the Dendrological Nursery; there just wasn't any money for feeding the logging crews (where food was provided not according to norms but according to available funds).

And as for archaeological excavations? Yes, we have a Commission for Excavations. It is important for us to know our past.

In front of the camp administration building was a flowerbed. In it was outlined a friendly elephant—the acronym for "Solovetsky Special Purpose Camp" being SLON—"elephant." On the blanket on the elephant's back was the letter "U"—standing for "Administration." And that very same rebus was on the Solovetsky coupons which circulated as the currency of this northern state. What a pleasant, cozy little masquerade! So it would seem that everything was really very nice here, that that practical joker Kurilko had only been trying to throw a scare into us for nothing? And then, too, the camp had its own magazine—also called *Slon*. (The first numbers came out in 1924, typed, and from issue No. 9 on it was printed in the monastery printing shop.) From 1925 on *The Solovetsky Islands* had been published in two hundred copies, and had its own supplement—the newspaper *Novyye Solovki* (*New Solovki*). (We shall break with our accursed monastery past!) And from 1926 on subscriptions were accepted from the entire Soviet Union, and the run was a large one, and it was a big success.[13] Censorship of the magazine was evidently superficial; the prisoners (according to Glubokovsky) wrote joking verses about the GPU Troika—and they were passed! And then they were sung from the stage of the

13. And almost immediately it was broken off: the regime showed it was not in such a joking mood. In 1929, after the big events on Solovki and a general turn in all camps in the direction of re-education, the magazine was started up once again and appeared until 1932.

Solovetsky theater right in front of Troika Chairman Gleb Boky himself:

They promised us gifts—a bag full—
Boky, Feldman, Vasilyev and Vul!

And this bigwig liked it! (Well, after all it was flattering! You hadn't even finished school—and here you were, going down in history.) Then the chorus:

All those who rewarded us with Solovki,
We do invite: Come take your leisure!
Sit here with us for three or five—
You'll always remember them with pleasure!

They roared! They liked it! (Who was there to figure out that this was a prophecy?)

And impudent Shepchinsky, the son of a general who had been shot, then hung a slogan over the entrance gates:

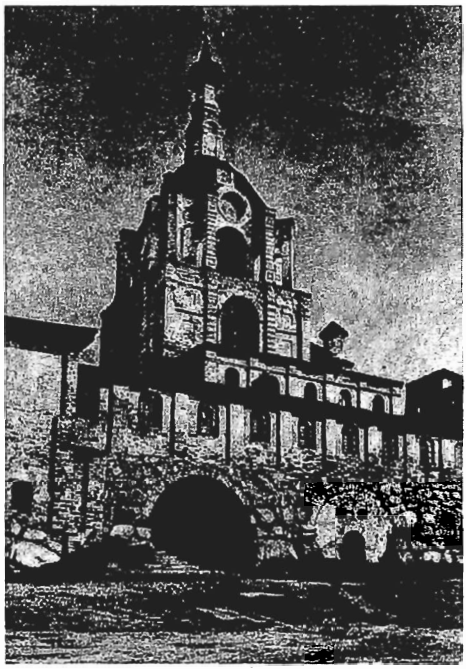
"SOLOVKI—FOR THE WORKERS AND PEASANTS!"

(And this, too, was a prophecy after all! But it didn't go over well: they figured this one out, and they took it down.)

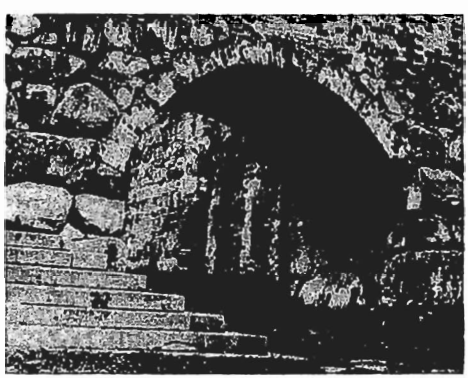
The actors of the dramatics troupe wore costumes made out of church vestments. They presented *The Rails Hum*. There were affected foxtrotting couples on the stage (the dying West)—and a victorious Red forge painted on the backdrop (Us).

It was a fantastic world! No, that scoundrel Kurilko had just been joking!

And then there was also the Solovetsky Society for Local Lore, which published reports and researches. For instance, about the unique sixteenth-century architecture or the Solovetsky fauna. And they wrote in such detail and with such scholarly devotion, with such a gentle love for their subject, that it really seemed as if these idle eccentric scholars had come to the island because of their passion for knowledge, not as prisoners who had already passed through the Lubyanka and who were trembling lest they end up on Sekirnaya Hill, or out under mosquitoes, or fastened to the empty shafts behind a horse. Yes, the very Solovetsky beasts and birds, in keeping with the spirit of the students of local lore, had not yet died out, had not been shot or expelled, were not even frightened. Even as late as 1928 a whole trusting brood of hares would come right up to the very edge of the road and watch with curiosity the prisoners being led off to Anzer.



5. The bell tower



6. Door under the bell tower arch

How had it happened that the hares had not been exterminated? They would explain it to the newcomer this way: The little beasts and birds are not afraid here because there is a GPU order in effect: *"Save ammunition!* Not a single shot is to be fired, *except at a prisoner!"*

So all the scares were just a joke! But a shout comes in broad daylight in the kremlin yard where prisoners are crowded as thick as on Nevsky Prospekt: "Make way! Make way!" And three foppish young men with the faces of junkies (the lead man drives back the crowd of prisoners not with a club but with a riding crop) drag along swiftly by the shoulders a prisoner with limp arms and legs dressed only in his underwear. His face is horrible—*flowing* like liquid! They drag him off *beneath the bell tower* (Illustrations Nos. 5 and 6: right there beneath the arch and through that low door—it is set into the bell tower foundations). They squeeze him through that little door and shoot him in the back of the head—steep stairs lead down inside, and he tumbles down them, and they can pile up as many as seven or eight men in there, and then send men to drag out the corpses and detail women (mothers and wives of men who have emigrated to Constantinople and religious believers who refuse to recant their faith and to allow their children to be torn from it) to wash down the steps.[14]

But why like this? Couldn't they have done it at night—quietly? But why do it quietly? In that case a bullet would be wasted. In the daytime crowd the bullet had an educational function. It, so to speak, struck down ten with one shot.

They shot them in a different way too—right at the Onufriyev cemetery, behind the women's barracks (the former guest house for women pilgrims). And in fact that road past the women's barracks was christened *execution* road. In winter one could see a man being led barefoot along it, in only his underwear, through the snow (no, it was not for torture! it was just so his footgear and clothes should not go to waste), his hands bound behind his back with wire,[15] and the condemned man would bear himself

14. And right now, there on the stones over which they dragged them, in that part of the courtyard secluded from the Solovetsky wind, cheerful tourists, who have come to see the notorious islands, *sock a volleyball* hours at a time. They do not know. Well, and if they did know? They would go on *socking* anyway.

15. A Solovetsky method which, strangely, was repeated with the corpses at Katyn Forest. Someone remembered—a matter perhaps of tradition? Or was it personal experience?

proudly and erectly, and with his lips alone, without the help of his hands, smoke the last cigarette of his life. (This was how you recognized an officer. After all, these were men who had gone through seven years on different fronts. There was an eighteen-year-old youth, the son of the historian V. A. Potto, who, when he was asked his profession by a work assigner,* replied with a shrug of the shoulders: "Machine gunner." Because of his youth, in the heat of the Civil War, he had never managed to acquire any other.)

A fantastic world! And that's the way it is sometimes. Much in history repeats itself, but there also exist completely unique combinations, brief in duration, and limited in place. One such example was our New Economic Policy—the NEP. And another was early Solovki.

There weren't many Chekists there at all (yes, and those who were may well have been in semipunishment status); no more than twenty to forty people held sway over thousands, many thousands. (At the very beginning they hadn't expected so many, but Moscow kept sending and sending and sending. In the first half-year, by December, 1923, there were already two thousand prisoners gathered there. And in 1928 in the 13th Company alone—the general-work company—the last in formation on count-off would announce: "The 376th! Ten in the unit!" And what that added up to was 3,760 men, and the 12th Company was just as large, and the 17th—which dug mass graves in the cemetery—was even bigger. And in addition to the kremlin companies there were already others in "kommandirovki"—temporary work parties: Savvatiyevo, Filimonovo, Muksalma, Trinity, and "Zaichiki"—the Zayatsky Islands.) By 1928 there were altogether about sixty thousand. And how many among them were "machine gunners," veteran soldiers with long service records? And in 1926 the inveterate habitual-criminal elements of all sorts began to flood in. And how were they all to be kept in check, kept from rebelling?

Only *by terror!* Only with Sekirnaya Hill! With poles! With mosquitoes! By being dragged through stumps! By daytime executions! Moscow kept pushing out prisoner transports without taking into consideration local forces—but neither did Moscow set limitations on its Chekists by hypocritical rules: everything done to maintain order was a fait accompli, and it was really true that no prosecutor would set foot on Solovetsky soil.

And the second method was a gauze veil with a fringe: the era of equality—and New Solovki! Self-guarding by the prisoners! Self-supervision! Self-verification! Company commanders, platoon commanders, squad leaders—all from among the prisoners themselves. And their own amateur stage shows and their own self-amusement!

And beneath this terror and this fringe what kind of people were there? Who? Genuine aristocrats. Career military men. Philosophers. Scholars. Painters. Actors. Lyceum graduates.[16] Because of their upbringing, their traditions, they were too proud to show depression or fear, to whine and complain about their fate even to friends. It was a sign of good manners to take everything with a smile, even while being marched out to be shot. Just as if all this Arctic prison in a roaring sea were simply a minor misunderstanding at a picnic. To joke. To make fun of the jailers.

So there was an elephant on the money and in the flowerbed. So there was a goat in place of a horse.

And if the 7th Company was made up of actors, then its company leader had to be Kunst. And if there was a person named Berry-Yagoda,* then he, of course, had to be the chief of the berry-drier. And that is how those jokes came about which got past the ignoramus censors of the magazine. And those songs. Georgi Mikhailovich Osorgin used to walk around and mock: "Comment vous portez-vous on this island?" "A lager comme a lager."

(And these jokes, this stressed and emphasized independence of the aristocratic spirit—these more than anything else irritated the half-beast Solovetsky jailers. One time Osorgin was scheduled

16. Here are a few of the Solovki veterans whose names have been preserved in the memoirs of those who survived: Shirinskaya-Shakhmatova, Sheremeteva, Shakhovskaya, Fittstum, I. S. Delvig, Bagratuni, Assotsiani-Erisov, Gosheron de la Foss, Sivers, G. M. Osorgin, Klodt, N. N. Bakhrushin, Aksakov, Komarovsky, P. M. Voyeikov, Vadbolsky, Vonlyarlyarsky, V. Levashov, O. V. Volkov, V. Lozino-Lozinsky, D. Gudovich, Taube, V. S. Muromtsev, former Cadet leader Nekrasov (was it he?), the financier Professor Ozerov, the jurist Professor A. B. Borodin, the psychologist Professor A. P. Sukhanov, the philosophers Professor A. A. Meiyer, Professor S. A. Askoldov, Y. N. Danzas, the theosophist Myobus. The historians N. P. Antsiferov, M. D. Priselkov, G. O. Gordon, A. I. Zaozersky, P. G. Vasiyenko. The literary scholars D. S. Likhachev, Tseitlin, the linguist I. Y. Anichkov, the Orientalist N. V. Pigulevskaya, the ornithologist G. Polyakov, the artists Braz and P. F. Smotritsky, the actors I. D. Kalugin (of the Aleksandrinka), B. Glubokovsky, V. Y. Korolenko (a nephew). In the thirties, near the end of Solovki, Father Pavel A. Florensky was also there.

to be shot. And that very day his young wife [and he himself was not yet forty] disembarked on the wharf there. And Osorgin begged the jailers not to spoil his wife's visit for her. He promised that he would not let her stay more than three days and that they could shoot him as soon as she left. And here is the kind of self-control this meant, the sort of thing we have forgotten because of the anathema we have heaped upon the aristocracy, we who whine at every petty misfortune and every petty pain: For three days he never left his wife's side, and he had to keep her from guessing the situation! He must not hint at it even in one single phrase! He must not allow his spirits to quaver. He must not allow his eyes to darken. Just once [his wife is alive and she remembers it now], when they were walking along the Holy Lake, she turned and saw that her husband had clutched his head in torment. "What's wrong?" "Nothing," he answered instantly. She could have stayed still longer, but he begged her to leave. As the steamer pulled away from the wharf, he was already undressing to be shot.)

But still someone did give them those three days. Those three Osorgin days, like other cases, show how far the Solovetsky regime was from having donned the armor of *a system*. The impression is left that the *air* of Solovki strangely mingled extreme cruelty with an almost benign incomprehension of where all this was leading, which Solovetsky characteristics were becoming the embryo of the great Archipelago and which were destined to dry up and wither in the bud. After all, the Solovetsky Islands people did not yet, generally speaking, firmly believe that the ovens of the Arctic Auschwitz had been lit right there and that its crematory furnaces had been thrown open to all who were ever brought there. (But, after all, that is exactly how it was!) People there were also misled by the fact that all their prison terms were exceedingly short: it was rare that anyone had a ten-year term, and even five was not found very often, and most of them were three, just three. And this whole cat-and-mouse trick of the law was still not understood: to pin down and let go, and pin down again and let go again. And that patriarchal failure to understand where everything was heading could not have failed entirely to influence the guards from among the prisoners also, and perhaps in a minor way the prison keepers themselves.

No matter how clear-cut the declarations of the class teaching, openly displayed and proclaimed everywhere, that the sole fate the enemy deserves is annihilation—still, it was impossible to picture to oneself the annihilation of each concrete two-legged individual possessing hair, eyes, a mouth, a neck and shoulders. One could actually believe that *classes* were being destroyed, but the *people* who constituted these classes should be left, shouldn't they? The eyes of Russians who had been brought up in other generous and vague concepts, like eyes seeing through badly prescribed eyeglasses, could in no wise read with exactitude the phrases of the cruel teaching. Not long before, apparently, there had been months and years of openly proclaimed terror—yet it was still impossible to believe!

Here, too, on the first islands of the Archipelago, was felt the instability of those checkered years of the middle twenties, when things were but poorly understood in the country as a whole. Was everything already prohibited? Or, on the contrary, were things only now beginning to be allowed? Age-old Russia still believed so strongly in rapturous phrases! And there were only a few prophets of gloom who had already figured things out and who knew when and how all this would be smashed into smithereens.

The cupola had been damaged by fire—but the masonry was eternal. . . . The land cultivated on the very edge of the earth . . . had now been laid waste. The color of the restless sea was changeable. The lakes still. The animals trusting. The people merciless. And the albatrosses flew to the Bay of Biscay to spend the winter with all the secrets of the first island of the Archipelago. But they would not tell their secrets on the carefree beaches . . . but they would tell no one in Europe.

A fantastic world. And one of the main short-lived fantasies was this: camp life was run by . . . White Guards! So Kurilko was . . . not a chance phenomenon.

Here is how it worked. In the whole kremlin the only free Chekist was the camp duty officer. Guarding the gates (there were no watchtowers) and patrolling the islands and catching escapees were up to the guard. Other than free people, they recruited into the guard ordinary murderers, counterfeiters, and other habitual criminals (but not the thieves). But who was there to take charge of the whole internal organization, who was to run the Admini-

strative Section, and who were to be the company and squad commanders? Not, certainly, the priests, nor the sectarian prisoners, nor the NEPmen, nor the scholars, nor the students. (There were no few students there, too, but a student's cap on the head of a Solovetsky prisoner was considered a challenge, an impudence, a black mark, and an application to get shot.) It was former military men who could do this best. And what military people were there other than the White officers?

And thus, without any special deal and hardly as the result of any well-thought-out plan, the Solovetsky cooperation of the Chekists and the White Guards began!

Where were the principles of either? It is surprising? Astonishing? Only to someone used to social analysis on a class basis and unable to see differently. But to such an analyst everything in the whole world is bound to be astonishing, because the world and human beings never fit into his previously set grooves.

And the Solovetsky prison keepers would have taken the devil himself into their service, given that they had not been given "Red" personnel. It had been decreed: the prisoners should supervise themselves (in other words, oppress themselves). And who was there to whom this could better have been entrusted?

And as for the eternal officers, the "military breed," how could they forgo taking into their own hands at least the organization of camp life (camp oppression)? Just how could they stand aside submissively, watching someone else take charge incapably and mess everything up? We have already discussed earlier in this book the subject of what shoulder boards do to the human heart. (And just bide your time. The day will come when the Red commanding officers will be arrested too—and how they will fight for jobs in the camp guards, how they will long to get hold of a turnkey's rifle, just so as to be trusted again! I have already said that if Malyuta Skuratov had just summoned us . . .) Well, and the White Guards must have felt much the same: All right, we're lost anyway, and *everything* is lost, so what difference does it make, why not! Then too: "The worse, the better"—we'll help you make a hellhole out of Solovki, of a kind that never ever existed in *our* Russia, and your reputation will be all the worse. And then: All the rest of our boys agreed, so what am I supposed to do—sit in the warehouse as a bookkeeper like a priest?

Nonetheless, the most fantastic Solovetsky story was not just

that alone but the fact that, having taken over the Administrative Section, the White Guards began to *put up a fight* against the Chekists! It's your camp on the outside, so to say, and ours on the inside. And it was the business of the Administrative Section to decide who worked where and who would be sent where. We don't meddle outside, so don't you meddle inside!

Not very likely, that! For after all, the Information and Investigation Section—the ISCh—had to have the whole inside of the camp speckled with its stoolies! This was the primary and the dreaded power in camp—the ISCh. (And the security officers were also recruited from among the prisoners—the crowning glory of prisoner self-supervision!) And that was what the White Guard Administrative Section—the ACh—took upon itself to do battle with! All the other *sections*—the Cultural and Educational Section and the Medical Section, which would have such great significance in future camps—were both frail and pitiful here. And the Economic Section, headed by N. Frenkel, was also merely vegetating. It engaged in "trade" with the outside world and ran the nonexistent "industry"; the paths of its future grandeur had not yet been plotted. So it was the two powers, the ISCh and the ACh, that fought it out. It began right at the Kem Transit Camp: The newly arrived poet A. Yaroslavsky approached the squad commander and whispered something in his ear. The squad commander bellowed out his words with military precision: "You were *secret*—so now you're *public!*"

The ISCh had its Sekirka, its punishment blocks, its denunciations, its personal case files on the prisoners, and had control of liberating prisoners ahead of time and executions. It also was in charge of censoring letters and parcels. And the ACh controlled work parties, reassignment from island to island, and prisoner transports.

The ACh exposed the ISCh stoolies in order to send them off on prisoner transports. The stoolies were pursued and fled and hid in ISCh headquarters—but they were pursued even there, and the ISCh rooms were broken into and the stoolies dragged out and hauled off to prisoner transports.[17]

(They were dispatched to Kondostrov, to logging camps. And there the fantastic story went right on. In Kondostrov the exposed

17. It is interesting that the dawn of the Archipelago thus began with the very same phenomenon to which the later Special Camps returned: with a blow struck at the stoolies.

and ruined stoolies published a wall newspaper entitled *Stukach* [*Stoolie*], and in it, with sad humor, they further "exposed" in each other such sins as "being overpampered" and the like.)

At this point the heads of ISCh brought *charges* against the eager beavers of the ACh, lengthened their terms, and sent them to Sekirka. But the ISCh defense was complicated by the fact that an exposed informer, in the interpretation of those years, was considered a criminal. (Article 121 of the Criminal Code: "disclosure . . . by an official personage of information not to be disclosed"—quite independently of whether disclosure took place intentionally or not and in what degree the individual was actually an *official* personage.) Consequently, exposed informers could not be defended and saved by the ISCh. Once caught they had only themselves to blame. Kondostrov was almost legitimized.

The height of the "hostilities" between the ISCh and the ACh came in 1927 when the White Guards broke into the ISCh, cracked the safe, seized and published the complete lists of stoolies —who thereby became hopeless criminals! After that, however, the ACh steadily declined: there were ever fewer former officers, and the percentage of criminals continually rose (for example, the "chubarovtsy"—as a result of the notorious Leningrad thugs trial). And gradually the Administrative Section was subdued.

Yes, and then in the thirties a new camp era began, when Solovki even ceased to be Solovki—and became a mere run-of-the-mill "Corrective Labor Camp." And the black star of the ideologist of that new era, Naftaly Frenkel, rose in the heavens while his formula became the supreme law of the Archipelago:

"We have to squeeze everything out of a prisoner in the first three months—after that we don't need him any more."

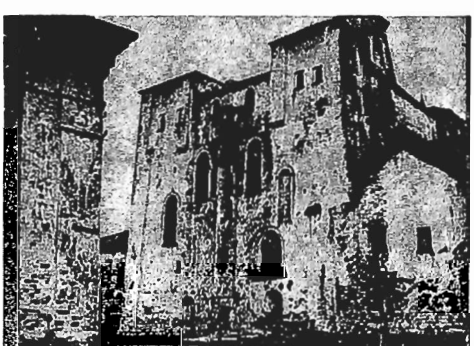
■

But where are Savvaty and German and Zosima? Who was it who thought of living below the Arctic Circle, where cattle can't be bred and fish can't be caught and breadgrains and vegetables don't grow?

Oh, you experts at ruining flourishing lands! So soon—in one year or two—to reduce the model agricultural enterprise of the monks to total and irreversible decline! How was it done? Did they plunder it and send away the plunder? Or did they destroy it all right there on the spot? And to be incapable of extracting

7. The Chapel of German

8. Preobrazhensky Cathedral: entrance



9. Preobrazhensky Cathedral (Church of the Transfiguration)

anything from the good earth while possessing thousands of unoccupied hands!

Only the free people there had milk, sour cream, and fresh meat, yes, and the excellent cabbage of Father Methodius. And for prisoners there was rotten cod, salted or dried; a thin gruel with pearl barley or millet grits and without potatoes. And there was never either cabbage soup or borscht. And as a result there was scurvy, and even "the office workers' companies" all had boils, and as for those on *general work*, their situation can be imagined. Prisoner transports returned "on all fours" from distant work parties—they actually crawled from the wharf on hands and knees.

The prisoners were allowed to use up nine rubles a month out of money orders from home—and there was a prison commissary in the Chapel of German (Illustration No. 7). And one parcel a month could be received, which was opened and inspected in the ISCh, and if you didn't bribe them, they would announce that much of what had been sent you was *prohibited*—grits, for example. In the Nikolskaya Church and in the Uspensky Cathedral the bunks rose—four tiers high. Nor was the 13th Company any less crowded in the block attached to the Preobrazhensky Cathedral (Illustration No. 9). Imagine the crowded mass of prisoners at that entrance (Illustration No. 8): 3,500 stampeding back to quarters on returning from work. It took an hour's wait in line to get hot water at the boilers. On Saturdays the evening roll calls dragged out till very, very late at night (like the former religious services). They were very particular about hygiene, of course: prisoners were forced to have heads clipped and beards shaved off (also all priests—one after another). In addition, they cut all the flaps off long clothing (particularly cassocks, of course), for they were a principal point of infection. (The Chekists had greatcoats which reached right down to the ground.) True, in the winter the ill and the aged sitting there in underwear and sacks could not make it to the baths from the company bunks. They were done in by the lice. (They hid the corpses under the bunks so as to get the extra rations—even though that was not very advantageous for the living: the lice crawled from the cold corpses onto the warm living survivors.) In the kremlin there was a bad Medical Section with a bad hospital, and in the remoter parts of Solovki there was no medicine at all.

(The sole exception was the Golgotha-Crucifixion Monastery on Anzer, a penalty work party, where they cured patients . . . by murdering them. There in the Golgotha Church prisoners lay dying from lack of food and from cruelty, enfeebled priests next to syphilitics, and aged invalids next to young thieves. At the request of the dying, and in order to ease his own problem, the Golgotha doctor gave terminal cases strychnine; and in the winter the bearded corpses in their underwear were kept in the church for a long time. Then they were put in the vestibule, stacked standing up since that way they took up less space. And when they carried them out, they gave them a shove and let them roll on down Golgotha Hill.[18])

At one time—in 1928—a typhus epidemic broke out in Kem. And 60 percent of those there died, but the typhus crossed to Bolshoi Solovetsky Island as well, and hundreds of typhus patients lay about in the unheated "theatrical" hall all at the same time. And hundreds likewise left there for the cemetery. (So as not to confuse the count, the work assigners wrote the last name of every prisoner on his wrist, and some of those who recovered switched terms with shorter-term cadavers by rewriting the corpses' names on their own hands.) And when many thousands of the Central Asian "Basmachi" rebels were herded here in 1929, they brought with them an epidemic characterized by black spots on the body, and all who fell ill with it died. It could not, of course, be the plague or smallpox, as Solovki people imagined it was, because those two diseases had already been totally wiped out in the Soviet Republic. And so they called the illness "Asiatic typhus." They didn't know how to cure it, and here is how they got rid of it: If one prisoner in a cell caught it, they just locked the cell and let no one out, and passed them food only through the door—till they all died.

What a scientific discovery it would be for us to establish that

18. This is an unusual name for a church and monastery, not encountered anywhere else. According to legend (a manuscript of the eighteenth century in the State Public Library, "Solovetsky Paterik" ["The Lives of the Solovetsky Fathers"]), on June 18, 1712, the monk-priest Job during an all-night prayer vigil at the foot of this hill saw a vision of the Mother of God "in all the glory of heaven"—and she said to him: "This hill from henceforth shall be called Golgotha, and on it shall be built a church and a monastery of the Crucifixion. And it will be whitened by the sufferings of countless multitudes." That is what they named it, and they built it there, but for more than two hundred years the prophecy was an empty one; and it did not seem likely that it would ever come true. But after the Solovetsky camp one could no longer say this.

in Solovki the Archipelago had not yet arrived at an understanding of itself, that the child had not yet guessed its own character! And then to observe how this character gradually manifested itself. Alas, it didn't work out that way! Even though there was no one to learn from, even though there was no one from whom to take an example, and even though it would seem that there was no hereditary element, nonetheless the Archipelago swiftly discovered and manifested its future character.

So much future experience had already been discovered at Solovki. The phrase "to extricate from general work" had already come into existence. All slept on board bunks, but there were nevertheless some who had individual cots. There were whole companies in the church, but some prisoners were crowded twenty to a room, and there were other rooms, with only four or five. There were already some who knew their rights: to inspect the women's prisoner transports and pick out a woman. (There were only 150 to 200 women for thousands of men, but later on there were more.) A struggle for the soft cushy spots through bootlicking and betrayal was already going on. They had already removed all the *Kontriki*—"Counter-Revolutionaries"—from office positions, to which they were then restored because the habitual criminals only messed everything up. The camp air was already thick with continual ominous rumors. The supreme law of conduct had already become: Trust no one! (And this squeezed and froze out the spiritual grace of the Silver Age.)

The free persons, too, had begun to enter into the sweetness of camp life and to taste its joys: Free families received the right to have the free services of cooks from the camp. They could always demand the services of woodcutters, laundresses, seamstresses, and barbers. Eichmans built himself an Arctic villa. Potemkin, too, a former sergeant major of the dragoons, subsequently a Communist, a Chekist, and then the chief of Kem Transit Camp, lived lavishly. He opened a restaurant in Kem. His orchestra was recruited from Conservatory musicians. His waitresses wore silk dresses. Gulag comrades who arrived from rationed Moscow could feast and frolic in luxury here at the beginning of the thirties. They were served at table by Princess Shakhovskaya and their check was only a formality, amounting to something like thirty kopecks, the rest being at the camp's expense.

Yes, and the Solovetsky kremlin—this was not the whole

Solovki. It was the most privileged place in camp. The real Solovki was not even in the monasteries (where, after the socialists were sent away, work parties were established). The real Solovki was in the logging operations, at the remote work sites. But it is precisely those distant backwoods that are most difficult to learn about nowadays, because *those* people did not survive. It is known that even at that time they did not allow the workers to dry themselves out in the autumn, that in winter they did not provide them with clothes or footgear in the deep snow, and that the length of the workday was determined by the *work norm*: the workday was completed when the work norm had been executed, and if it wasn't, there was no return to shelter until it was. And at that time, too, they "discovered" the device of new work parties which consisted of sending several hundred people to totally unprepared, uninhabited places.

But it would seem that in the first years of Solovki both slave-driving the workers and allotting back-breaking *work norms* took the form of periodic outbursts, transitory anger; they had not become a viselike *system*. The economy of the whole country was not based on them, and the Five-Year Plans had not been instituted. In the first years of SLON there was evidently no firm external economic plan. Yes, and for that matter there was no very careful calculation of how many man-days went into work for the camp as a whole. This was why they could suddenly switch with such frivolity from meaningful productive work to punishment: pouring water from one ice hole into another, dragging logs from one place to another and back. There was cruelty in this, yes, but there was also a patriarchical attitude. When slave-driving became a thought-out *system*, pouring water over a prisoner in subzero temperatures or putting the prisoner out on a stump to be devoured by mosquitoes had turned into a superfluity and a useless expenditure of the executioners' energy.

There is an official figure: up to 1929 in the R.S.F.S.R.—the Russian Republic of the Soviet Union—"only 34 to 41 percent of all prisoners were engaged in work."[19] (And how could it have been any different, in view of the fact that there was unemployment in the country at the time?) It is not clear whether work at servicing and maintaining the camp itself was included in this

19. Vyshinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

or whether it was only "external" work. At any rate, work at servicing and maintaining the camp itself would not have been enough to occupy all the remaining 60 to 65 percent of the camp prisoners. This proportion found its expression at Solovki as well. Clearly throughout the twenties there were no few prisoners without permanent work (partly because of the lack of anything to wear outdoors) or else performing purely formal duties.

That first year of the First Five-Year Plan, which shook up the entire country, shook up Solovki as well. The new Chief of SLON, appointed in 1930, Nogtev (the same Chief of the Savvatyevsky Monastery who had shot down the socialists), reported, to the accompaniment of a "whisper of astonishment in an astounded hall," to *the free inhabitants* of the city of Kem, these figures: "Not counting its logging operations for its own use, which had grown at quite exceptional tempos," USLON had filled "external" orders alone for the Railroad Timber Trust and the Karelian Timber Trust: in 1926—63,000 rubles; in 1929—2,355,000 rubles (thirty-seven times greater!); and in 1930, the total had jumped another three times. Road construction for the Karelian-Murmansk region had been carried out in 1926 in the amount of 105,000 rubles, and, in 1930, six million—increased by fifty-seven times![20]

And that is how the once remote Solovki, where they didn't know how to make full use of the prisoners, came to an end. The *miracle-worker work* rushed in to assist.

Solovki was created via Kem Transit Camp. And via Kem Transit Camp Solovki, in its maturity, began, at the end of the twenties, to spread back to the mainland. And the worst thing that could now befall a prisoner was to be sent out on these work parties on the mainland. Previously the sole mainland points belonging to Solovki were Soroka and Sumsky Posad—coastal appurtenances of the monasteries. But now the advancing SLON forgot its monastery boundaries.

From Kem, through the swamps to the west, to Ukhta, the prisoners began to build a dirt road, "which had at one time been considered almost impossible to build."[21] In the summer they drowned and in the winter they froze. The Solovki prisoners

20. *Solovetskiye Ostrova*, 1930, No. 2–3, pp. 56–57.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

feared this road to the point of panic, and for a long time the threat echoed and re-echoed over the kremlin courtyard: "What? You're asking for *Ukhta?*"

The second, similar road was from Medvezhyegorsk to Parandovsky. On its route the Chekist Gashidze ordered explosives set into a cliff and then sent KR's up on the cliff and through his binoculars watched them being blown up.

They say that in December, 1928, on Krasnaya Gorka in Karelia, the prisoners were left to spend the night in the woods as punishment for failure to fulfill the assigned norm of work—and 150 men froze to death there. This was a standard Solovetsky trick. Hard to doubt the story.

There is somewhat greater difficulty in believing another story: that in February, 1929, on the Kem-Ukhta road near the tiny settlement of Kut, a company consisting of approximately one hundred prisoners *was driven into the bonfire for failure to fulfill the work norm—and burned alive!*

I was told this story by one solitary person only, who had been close by: Professor D. P. Kallistov, an old Solovki veteran, who died recently. But I was never able to collect any corroborative testimony. (And maybe no one ever will collect any—and there is also much else about which no one is ever going to collect testimony, even one single solitary report.) But after all, why shouldn't people who freeze other people to death and who blow them up in an explosion burn them alive? Because the technology involved was no more complex.

Let those who prefer to put their faith in the printed word rather than in living people read about the road-building by this very same USLON, and by the very same zeks, in the very same year, except that the area was the Kola Peninsula:

"With great difficulty we built the dirt road along the valley of the Belaya River, along the shore of Lake Vudyarv to Kukisvumchorr (near the present Apatity) for a distance of seventeen miles, paving a swamp. . . ." (And what would you think it was *paved* with? The answer fairly leaps to the tip of the tongue, doesn't it? But it can't be set down on paper. . . .) ". . . with logs and sand embankments, leveling the capricious configuration of the crumbling slopes of the stony mountains." And then USLON built a railroad there in addition—"seven miles in a single winter month." (And why in one month? And why couldn't it have been

postponed till summer?) "The task seemed insuperable—400,000 cubic yards of excavations. . . ." (North of the Arctic Circle! In the middle of winter! And they called it earth? It was harder than any granite!) ". . . performed solely by hand—with pick, crowbar and spade." (And did they at least have mittens?) "The work was delayed by the need for a multitude of bridges. Work went on for twenty-four hours a day in three shifts, and the Arctic night was sliced by the light of incandescent kerosene lanterns as clearings were cut through the pine woods and stumps were dug out, in the midst of snowstorms which covered the roadbed deeper than the height of a man."[22]

Now go back and read that over. Then close your eyes and picture the scene: You are a helpless city dweller, a person who sighs and pines like a character in Chekhov. And there you are in that icy hell! Or you are a Turkmenian in your embroidered skullcap—your "tyubeteika"—out there in that night blizzard! Digging out stumps!

This was in those best and brightest twenties, before any "personality cult," when the white, yellow, black, and brown races of the Earth looked upon our country as the torchbearer of freedom.[23] This was during those selfsame years when they used to sing amusing ditties about Solovki from the nation's vaudeville stages.

And so, imperceptibly—via work parties—the former concept of the Special Purpose Camp, totally isolated on its islands, dissolved. And the Archipelago, born and come to maturity on Solovki, began its malignant advance through the nation.

A problem arose: The territory of this country had to be spread out in front of the Archipelago—but without allowing the Archipelago to conquer it, to distract it, to take it over or assimilate it to itself. Every little island and every little hillock of the Archipelago had to be encircled by a hostile, stormy Soviet seascape. It was permissible for the two worlds to interlock in separate strata —but not to intermingle!

And this Nogtev report which evoked a "whisper of astonish-

22. G. Fridman, "Skazochnaya Byl" ("A Fairy Tale"), *Solovetskiye Ostrova,* 1930, No. 4, pp. 43–44.

23. Oh, Bertrand Russell! Oh, Hewlett Johnson! Where, oh where, was your flaming conscience *at that time?*

ment" was, after all, articulated so as to initiate a resolution, a resolution by the workers of Kem, which would then appear in the newspapers and be posted in the villages:

. . . the intensifying class struggle inside the U.S.S.R. . . . and the danger of war which is increasing as never before[24] . . . require of the organs of the OGPU and USLON even greater solidarity with the workers, vigilance. . . .

. . . by organization of public opinion . . . a struggle is to be waged against free persons' rubbing elbows with prisoners . . . against concealment of escapees . . . against purchase of stolen and government property from prisoners . . . and against all kinds of malicious rumors which are being disseminated by class enemies about USLON.

And just what were those "malicious rumors"? That *people* were imprisoned *in camp*, and *without cause!*

And one more point: ". . . it is the duty of every person to inform. . . ."[25]

Disgusting free people! They were making friends with zeks. They were concealing escapees. This was a terrible danger. If an end was not put to it, there would be no Archipelago. And the country would be a goner, and the Revolution would be a goner.

And, therefore, to combat "malicious" rumors, honest progressive rumors were spread: that the camps were populated by murderers and rapists! That every escapee was a dangerous bandit! Lock your doors! Be frightened! Save your children! Catch them, turn them in, help the work of the OGPU! And if you knew of someone who did not help thus—*inform!*

Now, with the spread of the Archipelago, escapes multiplied. There was the hopelessness of the logging and road-building work parties—yet at the same time there was a whole continent beneath the feet of the escapees. So there was hope in spite of all. However, escape plans had excited the Solovki prisoners even at a time when SLON was still on a totally isolated island. The innocents believed in the end of their three-year term, but those who were foresighted had already grasped the truth that they would never see freedom in either three or twenty-three years. And that meant freedom lay only in escape.

But how could they escape from Solovki? For half a year the

24. In our country things are always increasing or intensifying *as never before*. They never ever get weaker.

25. *Solovetskiye Ostrova*, 1930, No. 2–3, p. 60.

sea was frozen over, but not solidly, and in places there was open water, and the snowstorms raged, and the frost bit hard, and things were enveloped in mists and darkness. And in the spring and for a large part of the summer there were the long white nights with clear visibility over long distances for the patrolling cutters. And it was only when the nights began to lengthen, in the late summer and the autumn, that the time was right. Not for prisoners in the kremlin, of course, but for those who were out in work parties, where a prisoner might have freedom of movement and time to build a boat or a raft near the shore—and to cast off at night (even just riding off on a log for that matter) and strike out at random, hoping above all to encounter a foreign ship. The bustle among the guards and the embarkation of the cutters would reveal to the islanders the fact of an escape—and there would be a tremor of rejoicing among the prisoners, as if they were themselves escaping. They would ask in a whisper: Had he been caught yet? Had he been found yet? Many must have drowned without ever getting anywhere. One or another of them reached the Karelian shore perhaps—and if he did was more silent than the grave.

And there was a famous escape from Kem to England. This particular daredevil (his name is unknown to us—that's the breadth of our horizon!) knew English and concealed it. He managed to get assigned to loading timber in Kem, and he told his story to the Englishmen. The convoy discovered he was missing and delayed the ship for nearly a whole week and searched it several times without finding the fugitive. (What happened was that whenever a search party started from the shore, they lowered him overboard on the opposite side on the anchor chain, where he clung under water with a breathing pipe held in his teeth.) An enormous fine had to be paid for delaying the ship, so they finally decided to take a chance and let the ship go, thinking that perhaps the prisoner had drowned.

Then a book came out in England, even it would seem, in more than one printing. Evidently *An Island Hell* by S. A. Malsagoff.[26]*

This book astounded Europe (and no doubt they accused its fugitive author of exaggerating, for, after all, the friends of the

26. And is this another book you have not read, Sir Bertrand Russell?

New Society could not permit themselves to believe this slanderous volume) because it contradicted what was already well known; the newspaper *Rote Fahne* had described Solovki as a paradise. (And we hope that the paper's correspondent spent time in the Archipelago later on.) And it also contradicted those albums about Solovki disseminated by Soviet diplomatic missions in Europe: fine-quality paper and true-to-life photographs of the cozy monks' cells. (Nadezhda Surovtseva, our Communist in Austria, received this album from the Soviet Mission in Vienna and indignantly denounced the slander about Solovki current in Europe. And at the very same time the sister of her future husband was, in fact, imprisoned at Solovki, and she herself was predestined to be walking single file in the Yaroslavl Isolator in two years' time.)

Slander or not, the breach had been a misfortune! And so a commission of VTsIK, under the chairmanship of the "conscience of the Party," Comrade Solts (Illustration No. 10), was sent off to find out what was going on there on those Solovetsky Islands (for, of course, they didn't have the least idea!). But in fact the commission merely rode along the Murmansk Railroad, and they didn't do much of anything even there. And they thought it right to send to the islands—no, to implore to go there!—none less than the great proletarian writer Maxim Gorky, who had recently returned to live in the proletarian Fatherland. His testimony would be the very best refutation of that repulsive foreign forgery.

The rumor reached Solovki before Gorky himself—and the prisoners' hearts beat faster and the guards hustled and bustled. One has to know prisoners in order to imagine their anticipation! The falcon, the stormy petrel, was about to swoop down upon the nest of injustice, violence, and secrecy. The leading Russian writer! He will give them hell! He will show them! He, the father, will defend! They awaited Gorky almost like a universal amnesty.

The chiefs were alarmed too: as best they could, they hid the monstrosities and polished things up for show. Transports of prisoners were sent from the kremlin to distant work parties so that fewer would remain there; many patients were discharged from the Medical Section and the whole thing was cleaned up. And they set up a "boulevard" of fir trees without roots, which were simply pushed down into the ground. (They only had to last a few days before withering.) It led to the Children's Colony,

opened just three months previously and the pride of USLON, where everyone had clothes and where there were no socially hostile children, and where, of course, Gorky would be very interested in seeing how juveniles were being re-educated and saved for a future life under socialism.

Only in Kem was there an oversight. On Popov Island the ship *Gleb Boky* was being loaded by prisoners in underwear and sacks, when Gorky's retinue appeared out of nowhere to embark on that steamer! You inventors and thinkers! Here is a worthy problem for you, given that, as the saying goes, every wise man has enough of the fool in him: a barren island, not one bush, no possible cover—and right there, at a distance of three hundred yards, Gorky's retinue has shown up. Your solution? Where can this disgraceful spectacle—these men dressed in sacks—be hidden? The entire journey of the great Humanist will have been for naught if he sees them now. Well, of course, he will try hard not to notice them, but help him! Drown them in the sea? They will wallow and flounder. Bury them in the earth? There's no time. No, only a worthy son of the Archipelago could find a way out of this one. The work assigner ordered: "Stop work! Close ranks! Still closer! Sit down on the ground! Sit still!" And a tarpaulin was thrown over them. "Anyone who moves will be shot!" And the former stevedore Maxim Gorky ascended the ship's ladder and admired the landscape from the steamer for a full hour till sailing time—and *he didn't notice!*

That was June 20, 1929. The famous writer disembarked from the steamer in Prosperity Gulf. Next to him was his fiancée, all dressed in leather—a black leather service cap, a leather jacket, leather riding breeches, and high narrow boots—a living symbol of the OGPU shoulder to shoulder with Russian literature.

Surrounded by the commanding officer corps of the GPU, Gorky marched with long swift strides through the corridors of several barracks. The room doors were all wide open, but he entered hardly any. In the Medical Section doctors and nurses in clean robes formed up for him in two rows, but he didn't even look around and went on out. From there the Chekists of USLON fearlessly took him to Sekirka. And what was there to see there? It turned out that there was no overcrowding in the punishment cells, and—the main point—no *poles*. None at all. Thieves sat on benches (there was already a multitude of thieves in Solovki),

and they were all . . . reading newspapers. None of them was so bold as to get up and complain, but they did think up one trick: they held the newspapers upside down! And Gorky went up to one of them and in silence turned the newspaper right side up! He had noticed it! He had understood! He would not abandon them. He would defend them![27]

They went to the Children's Colony. How decent everything was there. Each was on a separate cot, with a mattress. They all crowded around in a group and all of them were happy. And all of a sudden a fourteen-year-old boy said: "Listen here, Gorky! Everything you see here is false. Do you want to know the truth? Shall I tell you?" Yes, nodded the writer. Yes, he wanted to know the truth. (Oh, you bad boy, why do you want to spoil the just recently arranged prosperity of the literary patriarch? A palace in Moscow, an estate outside Moscow . . .) And so everyone was ordered to leave, including the children and the accompanying gaypayooshniki—and the boy spent an hour and a half telling the whole story to the lanky old man. Gorky left the barracks, streaming tears. He was given a carriage to go to dinner at the villa of the camp chief. And the boys rushed back into the barracks. "Did you tell him about the *mosquito treatment?*" "Yes." "Did you tell him about the *pole torture?*" "Yes." "Did you tell him about *the prisoners hitched up instead of horses?*" "Yes." "And how they roll them down the stairs? And about the sacks? And about being made to spend the night in the snow?" And it turned out that the truth-loving boy had told all . . . all . . . all!!!

But we don't even know his name.

On June 22, in other words after his chat with the boy, Gorky left the following inscription in the "Visitors' Book," which had been specially made for this visit:

"I am not in a state of mind to express my impressions in just

27. The gaypayooshnitsa—the GPU woman agent—who was Gorky's companion also exercised her pen, and here is what she wrote: "We are getting to know the life of the Solovetsky Camp. I went to the museum. . . . All of us went to 'Sekir-Hill.' From it there was a wonderful view of the lake. The water in the lake was coldly dark blue in color and around the lake was a forest. It seemed to be bewitched, and as the light shifted, the tops of the pines flared up, and the mirror-like lake became fiery. Silence and astonishing beauty. On the way back we passed the peat workings. In the evening we listened to a concert. We dined on local Solovetsky herring—small but surprisingly tender and tasty. They melted in the mouth." From *M. Gorky i Syn* (*M. Gorky and Son*), Moscow, Nauka, 1971, p. 276.

a few words. I wouldn't want, yes, and I would likewise be ashamed [!], to permit myself banal praise of the remarkable energy of people who, while remaining vigilant and tireless sentinels of the Revolution, are able, at the same time, to be remarkably bold creators of culture."[28]

On June 23 Gorky left Solovki. Hardly had his steamer pulled away from the pier than they shot the boy. (Oh, great interpreter of the human heart! Great connoisseur of human beings! How could he have failed to take the boy along with him?!)

And that is how faith in justice was instilled in the new generation.

They try to tell us that up there on the summit the chief of literature made excuses, that he didn't want to publish praise of USLON. But how can that be, Aleksei Maximovich? With bourgeois Europe looking on?! But *right now, right at this very moment*, which is so dangerous and so complicated! And the camp regimen there? We'll change it, we'll change the camp regimen.

And he did publish his statement, and it was republished over and over in the big free press, both our own and that of the West, in the name of the Falcon and Stormy Petrel, claiming it was nonsense to frighten people with Solovki, and that prisoners lived remarkably well there and were being well reformed.

And descending into his coffin, he gave his blessing to the Archipelago.[29]

And as for the camp regimen, they kept their promise. The regimen *was reformed*. Now in the 11th Punishment Company *they were kept standing for a week packed against one another*. A commission came to Solovki, and it wasn't a Solts commission either, but an investigative-punitive commission. It delved into

28. *Solovetskiye Ostrova*, 1929, No. 1, p. 3. (This inscription is *not* included in Gorky's collected works.)

29. I used to ascribe Gorky's pitiful conduct after his return from Italy and right up to his death to his delusions and folly. But his recently published correspondence of the twenties provides a reason for explaining it on lesser grounds: material self-interest. In Sorrento Gorky was astonished to discover that no world fame had accrued to him, nor money either. (He had a whole palace full of servants.) It became clear that both for money and to revive his fame he had to return to the Soviet Union and accept all the attached conditions. He thereby became Yagoda's voluntary prisoner. And Stalin killed him to no purpose, out of excessive caution: Gorky would have sung hymns of praise to 1937 too.

things and, with the help of the local ISCh, came to understand that all the cruelties of the Solovetsky camp regime were the work of the White Guards of the ACh, and of the aristocrats in general, and partly of the students too (those very same students who since the past century had been setting St. Petersburg on fire). At this point the silly unsuccessful escape attempt of the insane Kozhevnikov (former minister of the Far Eastern Republic) together with Shepchinsky and Degtyaryov, the cowboy, was inflated into an enormous and fantastic plot by the White Guards, who were allegedly scheming to seize a steamship and sail away. And they began to make arrests; and even though no one confessed to such a plot, the case kept on growing, as did the arrests.

They had set themselves a figure of "three hundred." And they reached it. And on the night of October 15, 1929, having dispersed everyone and locked them up in quarters, the Holy Gates, ordinarily kept locked, were opened so as to shorten the route to the cemetery. They kept taking groups there the whole night long. (And each group was accompanied by the desperate howling of the dog Black, who had been tied up somewhere and who suspected that his master Bagratuni was being led off in each new group. The prisoners could count the number of groups being taken off by the number of periods of howling; but because of a strong wind the shots themselves were less audible. This howling had such an impact on the executioners that the next day they shot not only Black but also all the other dogs on account of Black.)

The executioners were the three fancy Dan junkies, plus the chief of the camp guard, Degtyaryov, and, no less, the Chief of the Cultural and Educational Section, Uspensky. (The combination was only superficially astonishing. This Uspensky's biography is what is called *typical*, in other words not the most common, but concentrating in itself the essence of the epoch. He was born the son of a priest, and that is what he was when the Revolution caught up with him. What did he have to look forward to? Security questionnaires, restrictions, exile, persecution. And there is no possible way to erase this from one's record, no possible way to change one's father. But no, Uspensky discovered there was a way: *he killed his own father* and declared to the authorities that he had done it *out of class hatred!* This was a healthy attitude, and almost not murder at all! He was given an easy sentence—

and he immediately rose in the camp in the Cultural and Educational line of work and was soon liberated, and here we come upon him as the free Chief of the Cultural and Educational Section, the KVCh, of *Solovki*. And as far as these executions are concerned, it is not known whether he volunteered or whether they suggested he reaffirm his class position. By night's end, at any rate, he was seen washing off the blood-soaked tops of his boots, one after the other, over a washbasin.) And in Illustration No. 19 it is perhaps he on the far right, though it may merely be someone else with the same name.

They were drunk and careless—and in the morning the enormous pit, only lightly covered over, was still stirring and moving.

Throughout October, and during November too, they brought additional groups from the mainland for execution.[30]

(Somewhat later the entire cemetery was leveled by the prisoners while a band played in the background.)

After those executions the chief of SLON was replaced: Zarin came to replace Eichmans, and it is considered that a new era of Solovetsky legality was thereby established.

However, here is what it was like. In the summer of 1930 they brought to Solovki several dozen religious sectarians who rejected anything that came from anti-Christ: they refused to accept any documents, including passports, and they refused to sign for anything or to handle any money. At their head was a gray-bearded old man of eighty, blind and bearing a long staff. Every enlightened person could clearly see that these sectarians could never ever enter into socialism, because that required having a great deal to do with papers—and that therefore the best thing for them to do was to die. And so they sent them off to Maly Zayatsky Island, the smallest in the entire Solovetsky archipelago—sandy, unforested desert, containing a summer hut of the former monk-fishermen. And they expressed willingness to give them two months' rations, the condition being that *each one* of the sectarians would have to sign for them on the invoice. Of course they refused. At this point the indefatigable Anna Skripnikova intervened; notwithstanding her own youth and the youth of the Soviet government, she had already been arrested for the fourth time. She dashed back and forth between the accounting office, the

30. In one of them Kurilko was shot.

work assigners, and the chief of the camp himself, who was engaged in putting into effect the humanitarian regimen. She first besought compassion for them, and after that she begged to be sent to the Zayatsky Islands with the sectarians as their clerk, undertaking the obligation of issuing food to them each day and conducting all the bookkeeping formalities for them. And it would appear that this didn't conflict in any respect with the camp system. And the chiefs refused. "But they feed insane people without asking for signatures on receipts!" Anna cried. Zarin only burst out laughing. And a woman work assigner replied: "Maybe those are Moscow's orders—we don't really know. . . ." (Of course, they were instructions from Moscow—for who else would have taken the responsibility?) And so they were *sent off without food*. Two months later (exactly two months because they were then to be asked to sign for their food for the next two months) they sailed over to Maly Zayatsky and found only corpses which had been picked by the birds. Everyone was there. No one had escaped.

So who now is going to seek out those guilty? In the sixties of our great century?

Anyway, Zarin, too, was soon removed from his post—for liberalism. (And it seems he got ten years himself.)

■

From the end of the twenties the face of the Solovetsky Camp changed. From a silent trap for the doomed *KR's* it was transformed increasingly into the then new, but to us old, species of generalized ITL or Corrective Labor Camp. The number of "especially dangerous criminals from among the workers" multiplied rapidly in the nation, and they herded the nonpolitical offenders and hoodlums to Solovki. Both veteran thieves and beginning thieves landed on Solovki. A big wave of women thieves and prostitutes poured in. (And when they encountered each other at the Kem Transit Camp, the women thieves yelled at the prostitutes: "We may steal, but we don't sell ourselves." And the prostitutes shouted back: "We sell what belongs to us, not stolen goods.") The fact of the matter was that a war against prostitution had been proclaimed throughout the country (not in the newspapers, of course), and so they rounded them all up in all the

big cities and pasted a standard three years on all of them and drove many of them to Solovki. In theory it was quite clear that honest labor would swiftly reform them. However, for some reason they clung stubbornly to their socially humiliating profession, and while en route they asked to be allowed to wash floors in the convoy guards' barracks and seduced the Red Army men, subverting the statutes of the convoy service. And they made friends just as easily with the jailers—not for free, of course. They arranged things even better for themselves on Solovki, which was so starved for women. They were allotted the best rooms in the living quarters and every day new clothes and gifts were brought them, and the so-called "nuns" and the other KR women earned money by working for them, embroidering their underthings. And on completion of their terms, rich as never before, with suitcases full of silks, they returned home to begin an honest life.

And the thieves spent their time playing cards. And the women thieves found it useful to bear children on Solovki; there were no nurseries and by having a child they could get themselves released from work for their whole short term. (The KR women who preceded them had refused to take this way out.)

On March 12, 1929, the first group of juveniles arrived at Solovki, and from then on they kept sending and sending them (all of them under sixteen). At first they were quartered in the Children's Colony near the kremlin with those same showpiece cots and mattresses. They hid their government-issue clothing and shouted that they had nothing to go out to work in. And then they, too, were sent off to logging—from which they fled, switching all their names and their terms, and they had to be caught and thereupon sorted out all over again.

With the arrival of a socially healthy contingent of prisoners, the Cultural and Educational Section came to life. They campaigned for the liquidation of illiteracy. (But the thieves had not the slightest problem in telling the difference between clubs and hearts.) They posted a slogan: "A prisoner is an active participant in socialist construction!" And they even thought up a term for it too—*reforging.* (It was here that this term was invented.)

In September, 1930, came the appeal of the Central Committee to all workers for the development of socialist competition and the shock-worker movement. And how could the prisoners not be included? (If free people everywhere were being harnessed up,

then wasn't it also necessary to put the prisoners between the shafts?)

From here on our information comes not from living people but from the book of the scholar-jurist Averbakh.[31]

And therefore we suggest that the reader may wish to divide this information by 16 or maybe by 256, and sometimes it even needs to be taken in a reverse sense.

In the autumn of 1930 there was created a Solovetsky staff for socialist competition and the shock-worker movement. Inveterate repeaters, murderers, and cutthroats suddenly emerged "in the role of economy-minded managers, skilled technical directors, and capable cultural workers." G. Andreyev recalls: they used to scream in one's face: "Come across with your norm, you KR." The thieves and bandits had no sooner read the appeal of the Central Committee than they threw away their knives and their playing cards and simply burned with thirst to create a *Commune.* They wrote into the statutes that the social origin of members must be either poor or middle-level peasant families or the working class. (And it need be said that all the thieves were registered in the Records and Classification Section as "former workers"—so that Shepchinsky's former slogan almost came true: "Solovki—for the Workers and Peasants!") And on no account would 58's be admitted. (And the commune members also proposed that all their prison terms be added together and divided by their number so as to arrive at an average term—and that on its expiration they should all be freed simultaneously! But notwithstanding the Communist character of this proposal, the Chekists considered it politically premature.) The slogan of the Solovetsky Commune was: "Let us pay our debt to the working class!" And even better was the one: "*From us—everything, to us—nothing!*"[32] And here is the ferocious penalty they thought up to punish members of the commune who were guilty of infractions: to *forbid* them to go out to work! (Now it would be quite hard to find a stiffer punishment for a thief than that!!)

Nonetheless the Solovetsky administration, which was not about to go as far as the cultural and educational officials, did not base its faith too heavily on the thieves' enthusiasm, but in-

31. I. L. Averbakh, *op. cit.*

32. This particular slogan, which was fully mature, was probably worthy of All-Union dissemination.

stead "applied the Leninist principle: 'Shock work—Shock maintenance.' " What this meant was that the commune members were moved into separate barracks where they got softer bedding, warmer clothing, and were fed separately and better (at the expense of all the rest of the prisoners, of course). The commune members liked this very much, and for the purpose of keeping all their fellow members in the commune, they established the rule that there would be no more expulsions from it.

This sort of commune was also very popular among *non*commune members. And they all applied for admission to the commune. However, it was decided not to take them into the commune but to create second, third, and fourth "labor collectives," which would not have all those privileges. And in any case, the 58's were not accepted in any of the collectives, even though in the newspaper the most impudent of the hoodlums instructed the 58's: It's time, really, it's time, to grasp that camp is a school for labor!

And the reports were flown by plane to Gulag headquarters: Miracles at Solovki! A turbulent turning point in the attitude of the thieves! All the passion of the criminal world had been redirected into shock work, socialist competition, fulfillment of the production and financial plan! And in Gulag they were suitably astonished, and they broadcast the results of the experiment.

And that is how Solovki began to live: part of the camp was in the "labor collectives," and their percentage of plan fulfillment had not simply risen but doubled! (And the Cultural and Educational Section explained this by the influence of the collective. But we know what it was—common garden-variety camp padding of work sheets—"tukhta.")[33]

The other part of the camp, the "unorganized" part (yes, and also underfed, and underdressed, and engaged in the heaviest work), failed, as one can well understand, to fulfill its work norms.

In February, 1931, a conference of Solovetsky shock brigades

33. I have been reproached with spelling this word incorrectly, and told that it should be written as it is correctly pronounced in thieves' jargon: *tuFta*. For *tuKHta* is the peasants' assimilation of it, just like "Khvyodor" for "Fyodor." But I like it: "tuKHta" is somehow akin to the Russian language, while "tuFta" is totally alien. The thieves brought it, but the whole Russian people learned it—so let it be "tu*KH*ta."

decreed "a broad wave of socialist competition to answer the new slander of the capitalists about forced labor in the U.S.S.R." In March there were already 136 shock brigades. Then suddenly in April their general liquidation was decreed—because "a hostile-class element had permeated the collectives for the purpose of causing them to disintegrate." (Now there's a riddle for you: the 58's were not allowed across the threshold, and so who was it who was causing them to disintegrate? What we have to understand is that the "tukhta" had been uncovered. They had eaten and drunk and made merry; they had counted things up, shed a few tears, and taken the whip to some so the rest would get moving.)

And the joyous hubbub gave way to the noiseless dispatch of the prisoner transports: the 58's were being sent from the Solovetsky mother tumor to far-off fatal places to open up new camps there.

Chapter 3

■

The Archipelago Metastasizes

Well, the Archipelago did not develop on its own but side by side with the whole country. As long as there was unemployment in the nation there was no feverish demand for prisoner manpower, and arrests took place not as a means of mobilizing labor but as a means of sweeping clean the road. But when the concept arose of stirring up the whole 180 million with an enormous mixing paddle, when the plan for superindustrialization was rejected in favor of the plan for supersupersuperindustrialization, when the liquidation of the kulaks was already foreseen along with the massive public works of the First Five-Year Plan—on the eve of the Year of the Great Fracture the view of the Archipelago and everything in the Archipelago changed too.

On March 26, 1928, the Council of People's Commissars (meaning it was still under the chairmanship of Rykov) conducted a review of the status of penal policy in the nation and of conditions in places of imprisonment. In regard to penal policy, it was admitted that it was inadequate. And it was decreed[1] that harsh measures of repression should be applied to class enemies and hostile-class elements, that the camp regimen should be made more severe (and that *socially unstable elements* should not be given terms at all). And in addition: forced labor should be set up in such a way that the prisoner should not earn anything from his work but that the state should derive economic profit from it. "And to consider it necessary from now on *to expand the capacity*

1. TsGAOR, collection 393, shelf 78, file 65, sheets 369–372.

of labor colonies." In other words, putting it simply, it was proposed that more camps be prepared in anticipation of the abundant arrests planned. (Trotsky also had foreseen this same economic necessity, except that he again proposed that a labor army be created by the compulsory drafting of people. The horseradish is no sweeter than the black radish. But whether out of a spirit of opposition to his eternal rival or whether in order to cut people off more decisively from the possibility of complaint and hope of return, Stalin decided to process the labor army men through the prison machinery.) Throughout the nation unemployment was abolished, and *the economic rationale* for expansion of the camps appeared.

Back in 1923 no more than three thousand persons had been imprisoned on Solovki. And by 1930 there were already about fifty thousand, yes, and another thirty thousand in Kem. In 1928 the Solovetsky cancer began to creep outward, first through Karelia, on road-building projects and in logging for export. Just as willingly SLON began to "sell" its engineers: they went off without convoy to work in any northern locality and their wages were credited to the camp. By 1929 SLON camp sites had already appeared at all points on the Murmansk Railroad from Lodeinoye Pole to Taibola. From there the movement continued along the Vologda Railroad—and so active was it that at Zvanka Station it proved necessary to open up a SLON transport control center. By 1930 Svirlag had already grown strong in Lodeinoye Pole and stood on its own legs, and in Kotlas Kotlag had already been formed. In 1931 BelBaltlag had been born, with its center in Medvezhyegorsk,[2] which was destined over the next two years to bring glory to the Archipelago for eternity and on five continents.

And the malignant cells kept on creeping and creeping. They were blocked on one side by the sea and on the other by the Finnish border, but there was nothing to hinder the founding of a camp near Krasnaya Vishera in 1929. And the main thing was that all the paths to the east through the Russian North lay open and unobstructed. Very soon the Soroka-Kotlas road was reaching out. ("We'll complete Soroka ahead of 'sroka'—ahead of

2. This was the official date, but in actual fact it had been there since 1930, though its organizational period had been kept secret to give the impression of rapid work, for bragging, and for history. Here, too, was "tukhta."

term!" The Solovetsky prisoners used to make fun of S. Alymov, who, nonetheless, stuck to his last and made his name as a *poet and song writer.*) Creeping on to the Northern Dvina River, the camp cells formed SevDvinlag. Crossing it, they fearlessly marched on the Urals. By 1931 the Northern Urals department of SLON was founded, which soon gave rise to the independent Solikamlag and SevUrallag. The Berezniki Camp began the construction of a big chemical combine which in its time was much publicized. In the summer of 1929 an expedition of unconvoyed prisoners was sent to the Chibyu River from Solovki, under the leadership of the geologist M. V. Rushchinsky, in order to prospect for petroleum, which had been discovered there as far back as the eighties of the nineteenth century. The expedition was successful—and a camp was set up on the Ukhta, Ukhtlag. But it, too, did not stand still on its own spot, but quickly metastasized to the northeast, annexed the Pechora, and was transformed into UkhtPechlag. Soon afterward it had its Ukhta, Inta, Pechora, and Vorkuta sections—all of them the bases of great independent future camps.[3]

The opening up of so expansive a roadless northern region as this required the building of a railroad: from Kotlas via Knyazh-Pogost and Ropcha to Vorkuta. This called forth the need for two more independent camps which were railroad-building camps: SevZhelDorlag—on the sector from Kotlas to the Pechora River—and Pechorlag (not to be confused with the industrial UkhtPechlag!)—on the sector from the Pechora River to Vorkuta. (True, this railroad was under construction for a long time. Its Vym sector, from Knyazh-Pogost to Ropcha, was ready for service in 1938, but the whole railroad was ready only at the end of 1942.)

And thus from the depths of the tundra and the taiga rose hundreds of new medium-sized and small islands. And on the march, in battle order, a new system of organization of the Archipelago was created: Camp Administrations, Camp Divisions, Camps (OLP's—Separate Camps; KOLP's—Commandant's Camps; GOLP's—Head Camps), Camp Sectors (and these were the same as "work parties" and "work subparties"). And in the

3. We are giving dates and places equal weight but beg the reader to bear in mind that all this was gotten through questioning people and comparing, so there may be omissions and errors.

Administrations there were Departments, and in the Divisions there were Sections: I. Production (P.); II. Records and Classification (URCh); III. Security Operations (again the *third!*).

(And in contemporary dissertations they wrote: "The contours of educational institutions for *individual* undisciplined members of the classless society are taking shape ahead of time."[4] In actual fact, when there are no more classes, there will be no more criminals. But somehow it takes your breath away just to think that tomorrow society will be classless—and does that mean that no one will be *imprisoned? Only individual* undisciplined members. Classless society is not without its lockups either.)

And so all the northern portion of the Archipelago sprang from Solovki. But not from there alone. In response to the great appeal, Corrective Labor Camps (ITL's) and Corrective Labor Colonies (ITK's) burst out in a rash throughout our whole great country. Every province acquired its own ITL's and ITK's. Millions of miles of barbed wire ran on and on, the strands crisscrossing one another and interweaving, their barbs twinkling gaily along railroads, highways, and around the outskirts of cities. And the peaked roofs of ugly camp watchtowers became the most dependable landmarks in our landscape, and it was only by a surprising concatenation of circumstances that they were not seen in either the canvases of our artists or in scenes in our films.

As had been happening from the Civil War on, monastery buildings were intensively *mobilized* for camp needs, were ideally adapted for isolation by their very locations. The Boris and Gleb Monastery in Torzhok was put to use as a transit camp (still there today), while the Valdai Monastery was put to use for a colony of juveniles (across the lake from the future country house of Zhdanov). Nilova Hermitage on Stolbny Island in Lake Seliger became a camp. Sarovskaya Hermitage was used for the nest of Potma camps, and there is no end to this enumeration. Camps arose in the Donbas, on the upper, middle, and lower Volga, in the central and southern Urals, in Transcaucasia, in central Kazakhstan, in Central Asia, in Siberia, and in the Far East. It is officially reported that in 1932 the area devoted to Agricultural Corrective Labor Colonies in the Russian Republic

4. Vyshinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 429.

alone—was 625,000 acres, and in the Ukranian Republic 138,000.[5]

Estimating the average colony at 2,500 acres, we learn that at this time, without counting the other Soviet republics, there were already more than three hundred such *Selkhozy* alone, in other words the lowest grade and most privileged form of camp.

The distribution of prisoners between near and distant camps was easily determined by a decree of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of November 6, 1929. (How they do manage to hit the anniversary dates of the Revolution!) The former "strict isolation"—detention—was abolished (because it hindered creative labor), and it was ordained that those sentenced to terms of less than three years would be assigned to the *general* (near) places of imprisonment, while those sentenced to from three to ten years would be sent to distant localities.[6] Since the 58's never got less than three years, that meant that they all flocked to the North and to Siberia —to open it up and to die.

And the rest of us during those years were marching to the beat of drums!

■

A stubborn legend persists in the Archipelago to the effect that "*The camps were thought up by Frenkel.*"

It seems to me that this fanciful idea, both unpatriotic and even insulting to the authorities, is quite sufficiently refuted by the preceding chapters. Even with the meager means at our disposal we succeeded, I hope, in showing the birth of camps for repression and labor back in 1918. Without any Frenkel whatsoever they arrived at the conclusion that prisoners must not waste their time in moral contemplation ("The purpose of Soviet corrective labor policy is not at all individual correction in its traditional meaning")[7] but must labor, and at the same time must be given very severe, almost unbearable work norms to achieve. Long before Frenkel they already used to say: "correc-

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 136–137.
6. *Sobraniye Zakonov SSSR* (*Collection of Laws of the U.S.S.R.*), 1929, No. 72.
7. Vyshinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 384.

tion through labor" (and as far back as Eichmans they already understood this to mean "destruction through labor").

Yes, and not even contemporary dialectical thought processes were needed to arrive at the idea of using prisoners sentenced to heavy labor for work in remote, little-settled areas. Back in 1890, in the Ministry of Railroads they decided to use hard-labor exiles in the Amur region for laying rails on the railroad. They simply forced the hard-labor prisoners to work, while exiles and deportees were *permitted* to work at laying rails, and in return got a reduction in their terms by one-third or one-half. (However, they preferred to get rid of their whole term all at once by escape.) And from 1896 to 1900, work on the Lake Baikal shoreline sector of the Trans-Siberian was carried out by fifteen hundred hard-labor prisoners and twenty-five hundred compulsorily resettled exiles.[8] Therefore the idea was by no means new, and not founded on progressive educational theories.

Nonetheless, Frenkel really did become the nerve of the Archipelago. He was one of those successful men of action whom History hungrily awaits and summons to itself. It would seem that there had been camps even before Frenkel, but they had not taken on that final and unified form which savors of perfection. Every genuine prophet arrives when he is most acutely needed. Frenkel arrived in the Archipelago just at the beginning of the metastases.

Naftaly Aronovich Frenkel, a Turkish Jew, was born in Constantinople. He graduated from the commercial institute there and took up the timber trade. He founded a firm in Mariupol and soon became a millionaire, "the timber king of the Black Sea." He had his own steamers, and he even published his own newspaper in Mariupol called *The Kopeck*, whose function was to slander and persecute his competitors. During World War I Frenkel conducted some speculative arms deals through Gallipoli.

8. However, generally speaking, the course of development in nineteenth-century Russian hard labor was in just the reverse direction: labor became ever less obligatory, withered away. By the nineties, even at Kari, hard-labor camps had been transformed into places of passive detention and work was no longer performed. By this time, too, the demands made on workers had been eased at Akatui (P. Yakubovich). So the use of hard-labor prisoners on the Lake Baikal shoreline sector of the railroad was most likely a temporary necessity. Do we not observe here once again the "two horn" principle, or that of a parabola, just as in the case of the long-term prisons (Part I, Chapter 9): one prong of increasing leniency and one of increasing ferocity?

In 1916, sensing the pending storm in Russia, he transferred his capital to Turkey even *before* the February Revolution, and in 1917 he himself went to Constantinople in pursuit of it.

And he could have gone on living the sweetly exciting life of a merchant, and he would have known no bitter grief and would not have turned into a legend. But some fateful force beckoned him to the Red power.[9]

The rumor is unverified that in those years in Constantinople he became the resident Soviet intelligence agent (perhaps for ideological reasons, for it is otherwise difficult to see why he needed it). But it is a fact that in the NEP years he came to the U.S.S.R., and here, on secret instructions from the GPU, created, as if in his own name, a black market for the purchase of valuables and gold in return for Soviet paper rubles (this was a predecessor of the "gold drive" of the GPU and Torgsin). Business operators and manipulators remembered him very well indeed from the old days; they trusted him—and the gold flowed into the coffers of the GPU. The purchasing operation came to an end, and, in gratitude, the GPU arrested him. Every wise man has enough of the simpleton in him.

However, inexhaustible and holding no grudges, Frenkel, while still in the Lubyanka or on the way to Solovki, sent some sort of declaration to the top. Finding himself in a trap, he evidently decided to make a business analysis of this life too. He was brought to Solovki in 1927, but was immediately separated from the prisoner transport, settled into a stone booth outside the bounds of the monastery itself, provided with an orderly to look after him, and permitted free movement about the island. We have already recalled that he became the Chief of the Economic Section (the privilege of a free man) and expressed his famous thesis about using up the prisoner in the first three months. In 1928 he was already in Kem. There he created a profitable auxiliary enterprise. He brought to Kem the leather which had been accumulated by the monks for decades and had been lying uselessly in the monastery warehouses. He recruited furriers and shoemakers from among the prisoners and supplied fashionable high-quality footwear and leather goods directly to a special shop on Kuznetsky Most in Moscow. (The GPU ran it and took the

9. I have a personal hypothesis about this, which I will mention elsewhere.

receipts, but the ladies who bought their shoes there didn't know that, and when they themselves were hauled off to the Archipelago not long after, they never even remembered the shop.)

One day in 1929 an airplane flew from Moscow to get Frenkel and brought him to an appointment with Stalin. The Best Friend of prisoners (and the Best Friend of the Chekists) talked interestedly with Frenkel for three hours. The stenographic report of this conversation will never become public. There simply was none. But it is clear that Frenkel unfolded before the Father of the Peoples dazzling prospects for constructing socialism through the use of prisoner labor. Much of the geography of the Archipelago being described in the aftermath by my obedient pen, he sketched in bold strokes on the map of the Soviet Union to the accompaniment of the puffing of his interlocutor's pipe. It was Frenkel in person, apparently on that precise occasion, who proposed the all-embracing system of classification of camp prisoners into Groups A, B, C, D, which left no leeway to the camp chiefs and even less to the prisoner: everyone not engaged in providing essential services for the camp (B), not verified as being ill (C), and not undergoing correction in a punishment cell (D) must drag his workload (A) every day of his sentence. The world history of hard labor has never known such universality! It was Frenkel in person, and in this very conversation, who proposed renouncing the reactionary system of equality in feeding prisoners and who outlined a unified system of redistribution of the meager food supplies for the whole Archipelago—*a scale for bread rations and a scale for hot-food rations* which was adapted by him from the Eskimos: a fish on a pole held out in front of the running dog team. In addition, he proposed *time off sentence* and release ahead of term as rewards for good work (but in this respect he was hardly original—for in 1890, in Sakhalin hard labor, Chekhov discovered both the one and the other). In all probability the first experimental field was set up here too—the great Belomorstroi, the White Sea–Baltic Canal Construction Project, to which the enterprising foreign-exchange and gold speculator would soon be appointed—not as chief of construction nor as chief of a camp either, but to the post especially dreamed up for him of "works chief"—the chief overseer of the labor battle.

And here he is himself (Illustration No. 11). It is evident

10. Aron Solts

11. Naftaly Frenkel

12. Yakov Rappoport

13. Matvei Berman

14. Lazar Kogan

15. Genrikh Yagoda

from his face how he brimmed with a vicious human-hating animus. In the book on the Belomor Canal—the White Sea–Baltic Canal—wishing to laud Frenkel, one Soviet writer would soon describe him thus: " . . . the eyes of an interrogator and a prosecutor, the lips of a skeptic and a satirist . . . A man with enormous love of power and pride, for whom the main thing is unlimited power. If it is necessary for him to be feared, then let him be feared. He spoke harshly to the engineers, attempting to humiliate them."[10]

This last phrase seems to us a keystone—to both the character and biography of Frenkel.

By the start of Belomorstroi Frenkel had been freed. For construction of the Belomor Canal he received the Order of Lenin and was named Chief of Construction of BAMlag ("The Baikal-Amur Main Line Railroad"—which was a name out of the future, while in the thirties BAMlag was put to work adding a second track to the Trans-Siberian main line on those sectors where there was none). And this was by no means the last item in the career of Naftaly Frenkel, but it is more relevant to complete the account in the next chapter.

■

The whole long history of the Archipelago, about which it has fallen to me to write this home-grown, homemade book, has, in the course of half a century, found in the Soviet Union almost no expression whatever in the printed word. In this a role was played by that same unfortunate happenstance by which camp watchtowers never got into scenes in films nor into landscapes painted by our artists.

But this was not true of the White Sea–Baltic Canal nor of the Moscow-Volga Canal. There is a book about each at our disposal, and we can write this chapter at least on the basis of documentary and responsible source material.

In diligently researched studies, before making use of a particular source, it is considered proper to characterize it. We shall do so.

10. *Belomorsko-Baltiisky Kanal imeni Stalina, Istoriya Stroitelstva* (*The White Sea–Baltic Canal Named for Stalin; History of Its Construction*), Chapter 8.

Here before us lies the volume, in format almost equal to the Holy Gospels, with the portrait of the Demigod engraved in bas-relief on the cardboard covers. The book, entitled *The White Sea–Baltic Stalin Canal*, was issued by the State Publishing House in 1934 and dedicated by the authors to the Seventeenth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, and it was evidently published for the Congress. It is an extension of the Gorky project of "Histories of Factories and Plants." Its editors were Maxim Gorky, I. L. Averbakh,* and S. G. Firin. This last name is little known in literary circles, and we shall explain why: Semyon Firin, notwithstanding his youth, was Deputy Chief of Gulag.[11]

The history of this book is as follows: On August 17, 1933, an *outing* of 120 writers took place aboard a steamer on the just completed canal. D. P. Vitkovsky, a prisoner who was a construction superintendent on the canal, witnessed the way these people in white suits crowded on the deck during the steamer's passage through the locks, summoned prisoners from the area of the locks (where by this time they were more operational workers than construction workers), and, in the presence of the canal chiefs, asked a prisoner whether he loved his canal and his work, and did he think that he had managed to reform here, and did the chiefs take enough interest in the welfare of the prisoners? There were many questions, all in this general vein, and all asked from shipboard to shore in the presence of the chiefs and only while the steamer was passing through the locks. And after this outing eighty-four of these writers somehow or other managed nonetheless to worm their way out of participating in Gorky's collective work (though perhaps they wrote their own admiring verses and essays), and the remaining thirty-six constituted an authors' collective. By virtue of intensive work in the fall and winter of 1933 they created this unique book.

This book was published to last for all eternity, so that future generations would read it and be astounded. But by a fateful coincidence, most of the leaders depicted in its photographs and glorified in its text were exposed as enemies of the people within two or three years. Naturally all copies of the book were thereupon removed from libraries and destroyed. Private owners also

11. Anguished by the vanity of authorship, he also wrote his own individual booklet about the Belomor Canal.

destroyed it in 1937, not wishing to earn themselves *a term* for owning it. And that is why very few copies have remained intact to the present; and there is no hope that it may be reissued—and therefore all the heavier is the obligation to my fellow countrymen I feel on my shoulders not to permit the principal ideas and facts described in this book to perish. It would be only just, too, to preserve the names of the authors for the history of literature. Well, these at least: M. Gorky, Viktor Shklovsky, Vsevolod Ivanov, Vera Inber, Valentin Katayev, Mikhail Zoshchenko, Lapin and Khatsrevin, L. Nikulin, Korneli Zelinsky, Bruno Yasensky (the chapter "Beat the Class Enemy to Death!"), Y. Gavrilovich, A. Tikhonov, Aleksei Tolstoi, K. Finn.

Gorky explained in the following way why this book was necessary to the prisoners who had built the canal: "The Canal Army Men[12] do not have the necessary vocabulary to express the complex feelings of reforging"—and writers do have this vocabulary, so they will help. He explained as follows why the book was necessary for the writers: "Many writers after becoming acquainted with the canal . . . got 'charged up' as a result, and this has had a very positive impact on their work. . . . *A mood is going to appear* in literature *which will push it ahead* and put it on the level of our great deeds" (My italics—A.S. And this is a level still palpable in Soviet literature today). And why the book was necessary to its millions of readers (many of them were soon to flow to the Archipelago themselves) requires no elaboration.

What was the point of view of the authors' collective on the subject? First of all: certainty as to the justice of all sentences and the guilt of all those driven to work on the canal. Even the word "certainty" is too weak: for the authors this question is out of bounds not only for discussion but even for mention. It is as clear to them as the fact that night is darker than day. Using their vocabulary and their imagery to instill in us all the misanthropic legend of the thirties, they interpret the word "wrecker" as the basis of the engineers' being. Agronomists who spoke out against early sowing (maybe in snow and mud?) and irrigation experts who provided Central Asia with water—all were indubitable wreckers to them. In every chapter of the book these

12. It was decided to call them this in order to raise morale (or perhaps in honor of the labor army which was never created).

writers speak only with condescension of engineers as a class, as of a foul, low breed. On page 125 the book accuses *a significant segment of the Russian prerevolutionary engineering profession of swindling.* And this is not an individual accusation, not at all. (Are we to understand that engineers were even engaged in wrecking Tsarism?) And this was written by people of whom not one was capable of extracting even the simplest square root (which even certain horses do in circuses).

The authors repeat to us all the nightmare rumors of those years as historical gospel truth: that workers were poisoned with arsenic in factory dining rooms; that it is not just a piece of stupid carelessness if milk from the cow on a state farm went sour, but an enemy's stratagem to compel the country to *swell up from starvation* (and that's exactly how they write). In indefinite and faceless terms they write about that sinister collective *kulak* who *went to work in a factory and threw a bolt into the lathe.* Well, after all, they are oracles of the human heart, and it is evidently easier for them to imagine this: a person has managed by some miracle to avoid exile to the tundra, has escaped to the city, and by some still greater miracle has managed to get work in a factory when he is already dying of hunger, and at this point, instead of feeding his family, he throws a bolt into the lathe!

Then, on the other side, the authors cannot and do not wish to restrain their admiration for the leaders of the canal works, those employers whom they stubbornly call Chekists, although it is already the thirties, thereby forcing us to use the name too. They admired not only their minds, their wills, their organization, but also them—in the highest human sense, as surprising beings. Indicative was the episode with Yakov Rappoport. (See Illustration No. 12: he does not look to be stupid.) This student at Dorpat University, who failed to complete the course there, was evacuated to Voronezh, where he became the Deputy Chairman of the Provincial Cheka in his new homeland, and then Deputy Chief of Construction at Belomorstroi. In the words of the authors, Rappoport, while on an inspection tour of the construction site, was dissatisfied with the way the workers were pushing their wheelbarrows along, and he posed an annihilating question to the engineer in charge: Do you remember what the cosine of 45 degrees is equal to? And the engineer was crushed

and put to shame by Rappoport's erudition,[13] and immediately made corrections in his instructions aimed at wrecking, and the movement of the wheelbarrows immediately moved onto a high technological level. And with such anecdotes as these the authors not only enrich their exposition artistically but also lift us onto scientific heights!

And the higher the post occupied by the employer, the greater the worship with which he is described by the authors. Unrestrained praises are lavished on the Chief of Gulag, Matvei Berman* (Illustration No. 13).[14] Much enthusiastic praise is also lavished on Lazar Kogan (Illustration No. 14), a former Anarchist who in 1918 went over to the side of the victorious Bolsheviks, and who proved his loyalty in the post of Chief of the Special Branch of the Ninth Army, then as Deputy Chief of the Armies of the OGPU, and was one of the organizers of Gulag and then became Chief of Construction of the Belomor Canal. And it is even more the case that the authors can only endorse Comrade Kogan's words about *the iron commissar*: "Comrade Yagoda is our chief, our constant leader." That is what more than anything doomed this book! The glorification of Genrikh Yagoda was torn out, together with his portrait, from even that one copy of the book which survived for us, and we had to search a long time in order to find this portrait of him (Illustration No. 15).

This same tone permeated the camp leaflets even more strongly. Here, for example: "The honored guests, Comrades Kaganovich, Yagoda, and Berman, arrived at Lock No. 3. (Their portraits hung in every barracks.) People worked more quickly. *Up above* they smiled—and their smile was transmitted to hundreds of people down in the excavation."[15] And in officially inspired songs:

> Yagoda in person leads and teaches us,
> Keen is his eye, and his hand is strong.

13. And Rappoport got the meaning of the cosine all wrong. (*Belomorsko-Baltiisky Kanal, op. cit.*, p. 10.)

14. M. Berman—M. Bormann; once again there is only a one- or two-letter difference. Remember Eichmans and Eichmann.

15. Y. Kuzemko, *3-i Shlyuz* (*The Third Lock*), KVO Dmitlag Publishers, 1935. "Not to be distributed beyond the boundaries of the camp." Because of the rarity of this edition, we can recommend another combination: "Kaganovich, Yagoda and Khrushchev inspect camps on the Belomor Canal," in D. D. Runes, *Despotism*, New York, 1963, p. 262.

Their general enthusiasm for the camp way of life led the authors of the collective work to this panegyric: "No matter to what corner of the Soviet Union fate should take us, even if it be the most remote wilderness and backwoods, the imprint of order . . . of precision and of conscientiousness . . . marks each OGPU organization." And what OGPU organization exists in the Russian backwoods? Only the camps. *The camp as a torch of progress*—that is the level of this historical source of ours.

The editor in chief has something to say about this himself. Addressing the last rally of Belomorstroi officials on August 25, 1933, in the city of Dmitrov (they had already moved over to the Moscow-Volga Canal project), Gorky said: "Ever since 1928 I have watched how the GPU re-educates people." (And what this means is that even before his visit to Solovki, even before that boy was shot, ever since, in fact, he first returned to the Soviet Union, he had been watching them.) And by then hardly able to restrain his tears, he addressed the Chekists present: "You devils in woolen overcoats, you yourselves don't know what you have done." And the authors note: the Chekists there merely *smiled.* (They knew *what* they had done. . . .) And Gorky noted *the extraordinary modesty* of the Chekists in the book itself. (This dislike of theirs for publicity was truly a touching trait.)

The collective authors do not simply keep silent about the deaths on the Belomor Canal during construction. They do not follow the cowardly recipe of *half-truths.* Instead, they write directly (page 190) that *no one* died during construction. (Probably they calculated it this way: One hundred thousand started the canal and one hundred thousand finished. And that meant they were all alive. They simply forgot about the prisoner transports devoured by the construction in the course of two fierce winters. But this is already on the level of the cosine of the cheating engineering profession.)

The authors see nothing more inspiring than this camp labor. They find in forced labor one of the highest forms of blazing, conscientious creativity. Here is the theoretical basis of re-education: "Criminals are the result of the repulsive conditions of former times, and our country is beautiful, powerful and *generous,* and it needs to be *beautified.*" In their opinion all those driven to work on the canal would never have found their paths

in life if the employers had not assigned them to unite the White Sea with the Baltic. Because, after all, "*Human raw material* is immeasurably more difficult to work than wood." What language! What profundity! Who said that? Gorky said it in his book, disputing the "verbal trumpery of humanism." And Zoshchenko, with profound insight, wrote: "Reforging—this is not the desire to serve out one's term and be freed [So such suspicions did exist?—A.S.], but is in actual fact a restructuring of the consciousness and the pride of a builder." What a student of man! Did you ever push a canal wheelbarrow—and on a penalty ration too?

This worthy book, constituting the glory of Soviet literature, will be our guide in our judgments about the canal.

How did it happen that the Belomor Canal in particular was selected as the first great construction project of the Archipelago? Was Stalin forced to this by some kind of exacting economic or military necessity? Looking at the results of the construction, we can answer with assurance that there was none. Was he thus inspired by his spirit of noble rivalry with Peter the Great, who had dragged his fleet over portages along the same route, or with the Emperor Paul, in whose reign the first project for such a canal originated? It seems unlikely the Wise Man had ever even known of this. Stalin simply needed a great construction project *somewhere* which would devour many working hands and many lives (the surplus of people as a result of the liquidation of the kulaks), with the reliability of a gas execution van but more cheaply, and which would at the same time leave a great monument to his reign of the same general sort as the pyramids. In his favorite slaveowning Orient—from which Stalin derived almost everything in his life—they loved to build great "canals." And I can almost see him there, examining with love the map of the North of European Russia, where the largest part of the camps were already situated at that time. And down the center of this region the Sovereign drew a line from sea to sea with the end of his pipe stem.

In proclaiming this project it had to be proclaimed necessarily as *urgent*. Because in those years nothing which was *not* urgent got done in our country. If it had *not* been urgent, no one would have believed in its vital importance, and even the prisoners, dying beneath the upturned wheelbarrows, had to believe in that

importance. Because if it had not been urgent, then they would not have been willing to die off and clear the way for the new society.

"The canal must be built in a short time and it must *be built cheaply!* These were Comrade Stalin's instructions." (And everyone who was alive then remembers what *the orders of Comrade Stalin* meant!) *Twenty months!* That was the time the Great Leader allotted his criminals both for the canal and for their own correction: from September, 1931, to April, 1933. He was in such a rush he would not even give them two full years. One hundred and forty miles. Rocky soil. An area abounding in boulders. Swamps. Seven locks in the Povenets "staircase," twelve locks on the descent to the White Sea. And "this was no Dneprostroi, which was allowed a long time for completion and allotted *foreign exchange.* Belomorstroi was entrusted to the OGPU and received *not one kopeck in foreign exchange!*"

So the plan looms more and more clearly: This canal was so badly needed by Stalin and the nation that it was not to get one kopeck of foreign exchange. Let *a hundred thousand* prisoners work for you simultaneously—what capital is more precious? And deliver the canal in twenty months! Not one day later.

That's when you rant and rage at the wrecker engineers. The engineers say: "We will make the structure of concrete." The Chekists reply: "There is not enough time." The engineers say: "We need large quantities of iron." The Chekists reply: "Replace it with wood!" The engineers say: "We need tractors, cranes, construction machinery!" The Chekists: "There will be none of that, not one kopeck of foreign exchange: do it all by hand."

The book calls this "the bold Chekist formulation of a technical assignment."[16] In other words, the Rappoport cosine.

We were in such a rush that we brought in people from Tashkent for this northern project, hydrotechnologists and irrigation experts (arrested, as it happened, at the most opportune time). With them a Special (once again *special*, a favorite word!) Design Bureau was set up on Furkasovsky Lane (behind the Big Lubyanka).[17] (Incidentally, the Chekist Ivanchenko asked the en-

16. *Belomorsko-Baltiisky Kanal, op. cit.*, p. 82.

17. This was thus one of the very earliest *sharashkas*, Islands of Paradise. At the same time people mention one other like it: the OKB—the Special Design Bureau—at the Izhora Factory which designed the first famous blooming mill for semifinished steel ingots.

gineer Zhurin: "Why should you make a plan when there already is a plan for the Volga-Don Canal project? Use it instead.")

We were in such a rush that they were put to work making a plan before surveys had been made on the ground. Of course we rushed survey crews into Karelia. But not one of the designers was allowed to leave even the bounds of the design office, let alone go to Karelia (this was vigilance). And therefore telegrams flew back and forth! What kind of an elevation do you have there? What kind of soil?

We were in such a rush that trainloads of zeks kept on arriving and arriving at the canal site before there were any barracks there, or supplies, or tools, or a precise plan. And what was to be done? (There were no barracks, but there was an early northern autumn. There were no tools, but the first month of the twenty was already passing.)[18]

We were in such a rush that the engineers who finally arrived at the canal site had no drafting papers, no rulers, no thumbtacks (!), and not even any light in their work barracks. They worked under kerosene wick lamps, and our authors rave that it was just like during the Civil War.

In the jolly tone of inveterate merrymakers they tell us: Women came in silk dresses and were handed a wheelbarrow on the spot! And "how many, many encounters there were with old acquaintances in Tunguda: former students, Esperantists, comrades in arms from White Guard detachments!" The comrades in arms from the White Guard detachments had long since encountered each other on Solovki, but we are grateful to the authors for the information that Esperantists and students also got their White Sea Canal wheelbarrows! Almost choking with laughter, they tell us: From the Krasnovodsk camps in Central Asia, from Stalinabad, from Samarkand, they brought Turkmenians and Tadzhiks in their Bukhara robes and turbans—here to the Karelian subzero winter cold! Now that was something the *Basmachi* rebels never expected! The norm here was *to break up two and a half cubic yards of granite and to move it a distance of a hundred yards in a wheelbarrow.* And the snow kept falling and covering everything up, and the wheelbarrows somersaulted off the gangways into the snow. Approximately like this (Illustration No. 16).

18. Plus several hidden—*tukhta*—months of the preliminary organizational period not reported anywhere.

But let the authors themselves speak: "The wheelbarrow tottered on the wet planks and turned upside down."[19] "A human being with such a wheelbarrow was like a horse in shafts."[20] "It took an hour to load a wheelbarrow like this"—and not even with granite, merely with frozen soil. Or a more generalized picture: "The ugly depression, powdered over with snow, was full of people and stones. People wandered about, tripping over the stones. They bent over, two or three of them together, and, taking hold of a boulder, tried to lift it. The boulder did not move. They called a fourth and a fifth." But at this point the technology of our glorious century came to their aid: "They dragged the boulders out of the excavation with a *net*"—the net being hauled by a cable, and the cable in turn by "a drum being turned by a horse"! Or here is another method they used: *wooden cranes* for lifting stones (Illustration No. 17). Or here, for example, are some of the first Belomorstroi machines (Illustration No. 18).

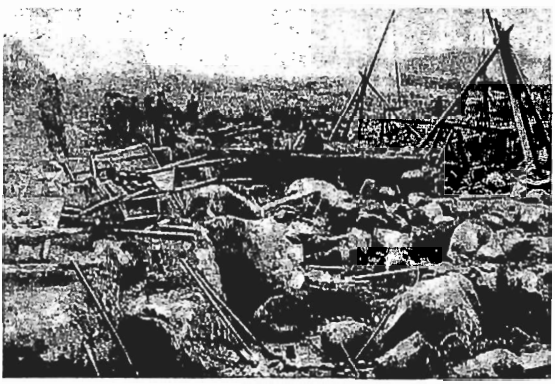
And are these your wreckers? No, these are engineering geniuses! They were hurled from the twentieth century into the age of the caveman—and, lo, they managed to cope with the situation!

The basic transportation at Belomorstroi consisted of *grabarki*, dray carts, with boxes mounted on them for carrying earth, as we learn from the book. And in addition there were also *Belomor Fords!* And here is what they were: heavy wooden platforms placed on four wooden logs (rollers), and two horses dragged this *Ford* along and carried stones away on it. And a wheelbarrow was handled by a team of two men—on slopes it was caught and pulled upward by a *hookman*—a worker using a hook. And how were trees to be felled if there were neither saws nor axes? Our inventiveness could find the answer to that one: ropes were tied around the trees, and they were rocked back and forth by brigades pulling in different directions—*they rocked the trees out.* Our inventiveness can solve any problem at all—and why? Because the *canal was being built on the initiative and instructions of Comrade Stalin!* This was written in the newspapers and repeated on the radio every day.

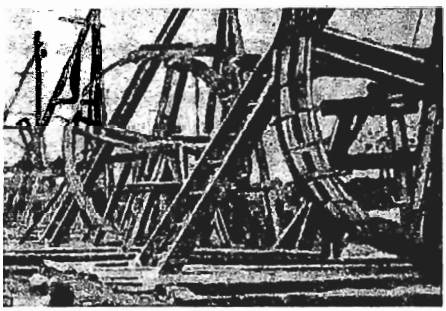
Just picture this battlefield, with the Chekists "in long ashy-

19. *Belomorsko-Baltiisky Kanal, op. cit.*, p. 112.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

16. A work detail



17. The wooden cranes



18. The earliest machinery

gray greatcoats or leather jackets." There were only thirty-seven of them for a hundred thousand prisoners, but they were loved by all, and this love caused Karelian boulders to move. Here they have paused for a moment (Illustration No. 19), Comrade Frenkel points with his hand, and Comrade Firin chews on his lips, and Comrade Uspensky says nothing (and is this that patricide? that same Solovki butcher?). And thereby were decided the fates of thousands of people during that frosty night or the whole of that Arctic month.

The very grandeur of this construction project consisted in the fact that it was carried out without contemporary technology and equipment and without any supplies from the nation as a whole! "These are not the tempos of noxious European-American capitalism, these are socialist tempos!" the authors brag.[21] (In the 1960's we will learn that this is called . . . the "Great Leap Forward.") The whole book praises specifically the backwardness of the technology and the homemade workmanship. There were no *cranes?* So they will make their own—wooden "derricks." And the only metal parts the "derricks" had were in places where there was friction—and these parts they cast themselves. "Our own industry at the canal," our authors gloat. And they themselves cast *wheelbarrow wheels* in their own *homemade cupola furnace.*

The country required the canal so urgently and in such haste that it could not even find any wheelbarrow wheels for the project! It would have been too difficult an order for Leningrad factories.

No, it would be unjust, most unjust, unfair, to compare this most savage construction project of the twentieth century, this continental canal built "with wheelbarrow and pick," with the Egyptian pyramids; after all, the pyramids were built with the *contemporary* technology!! And we used the technology of forty centuries earlier!

That's what our gas execution van consisted of. We didn't have any gas for the gas chamber.

Just try and be an engineer in these circumstances! All the dikes were earthen; all the floodgates were made of wood. Earth leaks now and then. How can it be made watertight? They drive horses over the dikes with rollers! (Stalin and the country were pitiless to horses as well as to prisoners—because horses were a kulak animal and also destined to die.) It is also very difficult to

21. *Ibid.*, p. 356.

eliminate leakage at contact points between earth and wood. Wood had to be used in place of iron! And engineer Maslov invented rhomboid wooden lock gates. There was no concrete used in the walls of the locks. And how could they be strengthened? They remembered the ancient Russian device called "ryazhi"—cribs of logs fitted and joined, rising fifty feet high and filled with soil. Make use of the technology of the caveman, but bear responsibility according to the rules of the twentieth century: if it leaks anywhere, "Off with your head!"

The Iron Commissar Yagoda wrote to Chief Engineer Khrustalyev: "On the basis of available reports [i.e., from stoolies and from Kogan-Frenkel-Firin] you are not manifesting and you do not feel the necessary energy and interest in the work. I order you to answer immediately: do you intend immediately [what language!] . . . to set to work in earnest . . . and to compel that portion of the engineers [what portion? whom?] which is sabotaging and interfering with the work to work conscientiously? . . . " Now what could the chief engineer reply to that? He wanted to survive. "I admit my criminal softness . . . I repent of my own slackness. . . . "

And meanwhile it is incessantly dinned into our ears: "*The canal is being built on the initiative and orders of Comrade Stalin!*" "The radio in the barracks, on the canal site, by the stream, in a Karelian hut, on a truck, the radio which *sleeps* neither day *nor night* [just imagine it!], those innumerable black mouths, those black masks without eyes [imagery!] cry out incessantly: what do the Chekists of the whole country think about the canal project, what does the Party have to say about it?" And you, too, better think the same! You, too, better think the same! "*Nature we will teach—and freedom we will reach.*" Hail socialist competition and the shock-worker movement. Competition between work brigades! Competition between phalanxes (from 250 to 300 persons)! Competition between labor collectives! Competition between locks! And then, finally, the *Vokhrovtsy*—the Militarized Camp Guards—entered into competition with the zeks.[22] (And the obligation of the Vokhrovtsy? To guard you better.)

But the main reliance was, of course, on the *socially friendly*

22. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

elements—in other words, the thieves! These concepts had already merged at the canal. Deeply touched, Gorky shouted to them from the rostrum: "After all, any capitalist steals more than all of you combined!" The thieves roared with approval, flattered. "And big tears glistened in the eyes of a former pickpocket."[23] They counted on being able to make use of *the lawbreakers' romanticism* in the construction. And why shouldn't the thieves have been flattered? A thief says from the presidium of the rally: "We didn't receive any bread for two days, but there was nothing awful in that for us. [After all, they could always plunder someone else.] What is precious to us is that people talk to us like human beings [which is something the engineers cannot boast of]. There are such crags in our path that the drills break. That's all right. We manage them." (What do they *manage them with?* And *who* manages them?)

This is class theory: friendly elements against alien elements as the basis of the camp. It has never been reported how brigadiers at Belomor ate; but at Berezniki an eyewitness (I.D.T.) says there was a separate *kitchen for the brigadiers* (all . . . thieves) and rations—better than in the army. So that their fists would get strong and they would know *for what* to put the squeeze on.

At the second camp there was thievery, grabbing dishes from the prisoners and also ration tickets for gruel, but the thieves were not expelled from the ranks of shock workers on that account; it did not cast a shadow on their social image, or their productive drive. They brought the food to the work sites cold. They stole clothes from the drivers—that was all right, *we'll manage.* Povenets was a *penalty site*—chaos and confusion. They baked no bread in Povenets but brought it all the way from Kem (look at the map!). On the Shizhnya sector the food norm was not provided, it was cold in the barracks, there was an infestation of lice, and people were ill—never mind, we'll *manage!* "The canal is being constructed on the initiative of . . ." KVB's—Cultural and Educational Battle Points!—were everywhere. (A hooligan no more than arrived in camp than he immediately became an instructor.) An atmosphere of constant battle alert was created. All of a sudden *a night of storm assault* was proclaimed—*a blow against bureaucracy!* And right at the end of the evening work the cultural instructors went around the administration rooms and

23. Y. Kuzemko, *op. cit.*

19. Frenkel, Firin, and Uspensky.

20. Distribution of the food bonus

took by storm! All of a sudden there was a *breakthrough* (not of water, of percentages) on the Tunguda sector. *Storm attack!* It was decided: *to double the work norms!* Really![24] All of a sudden, without any warning, some brigade or other has fulfilled its day's plan by 852 percent! Just try to understand that! So a universal *day of records* is proclaimed! A blow against *tempo interrupters. Bonus pirozhki* are distributed to a brigade (Illustration No. 20). Why such haggard faces? The longed-for moment—but no gladness . . .

It seemed that everything was going well. In the summer of 1932 Yagoda, the provider, inspected the entire route and was satisfied. But in December he sent a telegram: The norms are not being fulfilled. The *idle loafing of thousands of people* must be ended. (This you believe! This you see!) The labor collectives are *dragging their way* to work with *faded* banners. It has been learned that, according to the communiqués, 100 percent of the total amount of earth to be moved to build the canal has already been excavated *several times* over—yet the canal has not been finished. Negligent sloggers have been filling the log cribs with ice instead of stone and earth! And this will melt in the spring—and the water will break through. There are new slogans for the instructors: "*Tufta*[25] *is the most dangerous weapon of counter-revolution.*" (And it was the thieves most of all who engaged in "tufta"; filling the cribs with ice was, plainly, their trick.) And there was one more slogan: "*The cheater is a class enemy!*" And the *thieves* were entrusted with the task of going around *to expose "tufta" and verify the work done by KR brigades!* (The best way for them to claim as their own the work of the KR brigades.) "Tufta" is an attempt to destroy the entire corrective-labor policy of the OGPU—that's how awful this "tufta" is! "Tufta" is the theft of socialist property! That's how terrible that "tufta" is! In February, 1933, they rearrested engineers who had been released early—because of the "tufta" they'd discovered.

There was such élan, such enthusiasm, so whence had come this "tufta"? Why had the prisoners thought it up? Evidently they were betting on the restoration of capitalism. Things hadn't gone that way here without the White emigration's black hand being present.

At the beginning of 1933 there was a new order from Yagoda:

24. *Belomorsko-Baltiisky Kanal, op. cit.*, p. 302.
25. I accept "f" in "tufta" here instead of "kh" only because I am quoting.

All administrations were to be renamed *staffs of battle sectors!* Fifty percent of the administrative staffs were to be thrown into construction work (would there be enough spades?). They were to work in three shifts (the night was nearly polar)! They would be fed right on canal site (with cold food)! For "tufta" they would be put on trial.

In January came *the storm of the watershed!* All the phalanxes, with their kitchens and property, were to be thrown into one single sector! There were not enough tents for everyone. They slept out on the snow—never mind. *We'll manage!* The canal is being built on the initiative of . . .

From Moscow came Order No. 1: "To proclaim *a general storm attack* until the completion of construction." At the end of the working day they drove stenographers, office workers, laundresses onto the canal site.

In February there was a prohibition on all visits from relatives for the entire Belomor Camp system—either because of the danger of typhus or else because of pressure on the zeks.

In April there was an incessant forty-eight-hour storm assault —hurrah! *Thirty thousand people did not sleep!*

And by May 1, 1933, People's Commissar Yagoda reported to his beloved Teacher that the canal had been completed on time (Illustration No. 21: map of the canal).

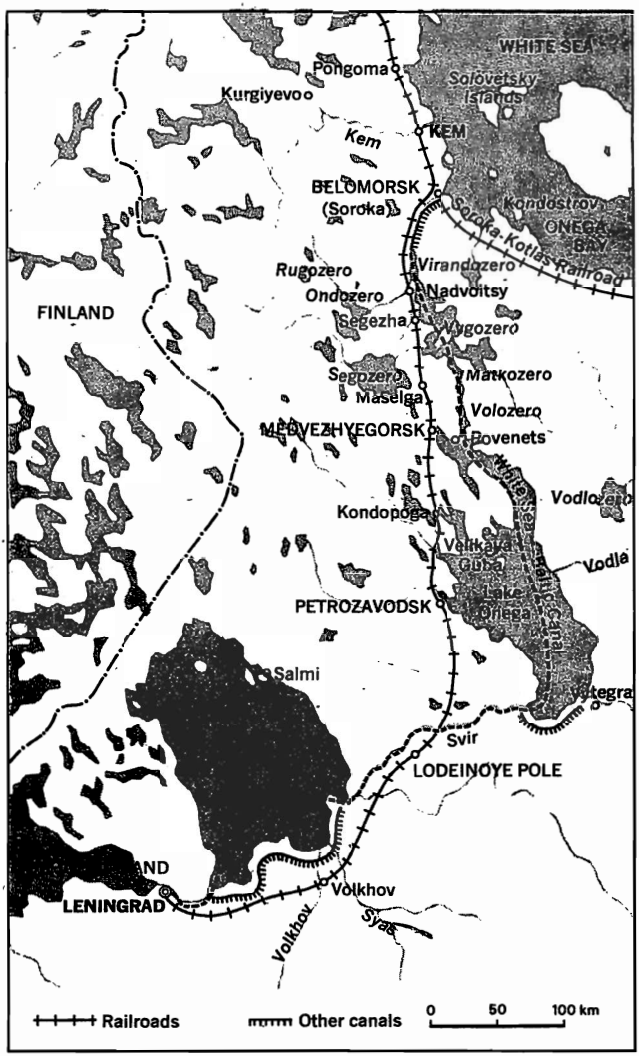
In July, 1933, Stalin, Voroshilov, and Kirov undertook a pleasant excursion on a steamer to inspect the canal. There is a photograph that shows them sitting on deck in wicker armchairs, "joking, laughing, smoking." (Meanwhile Kirov was already doomed but did not know it.)

In August the 120 writers made their excursion through the canal.

There were no people in the area to service and operate the canal. And so they sent dispossessed kulaks ("special deportees"), and Berman himself picked the places for their settlements.

A large part of the "Canal Army Men" went on to build the next canal—the Moscow-Volga Canal.[26]

26. At the August rally of the Canal Army Men Lazar Kogan proclaimed: "Not far off is the rally which will be the last in the camp system. . . . Not far off is that year, month and day when by and large corrective-labor camps will not be needed." He himself was probably shot, and never did find out how sadly mistaken he was. And maybe when he said it, he did not believe it.



21. Map of the Belomor Canal

Let us turn away from the scoffing collective writers' volume.

No matter how gloomy the Solovetsky Islands seemed, the Solovetsky Islanders who were sent off on prisoner transports to end their terms (and often their lives) on the Belomor Canal only there really came to feel that joking had ended, only there discovered what a genuine camp was like, something which all of us gradually came to know later. Instead of the quiet of Solovki, there were incessant mother oaths and the savage din of quarreling mingled with indoctrinational propaganda. Even in the barracks of the Medvezhyegorsk Camp in the Administration of BelBaltlag people slept on "vagonki"—double-tiered wooden bunks anchored in pairs (already invented), not just by fours but by eights, two on each single bunk panel—head by feet. Instead of stone monastery buildings, there were drafty temporary barracks, even tents, and sometimes people out on the bare snow. And those transferred from Berezniki, where they had also worked a twelve-hour day, found it was worse here. Days of work records. Nights of storm assaults. "From us everything, to us nothing." Many were crippled and killed in the crowding and chaos in the course of dynamiting rocky crags. Gruel that had grown cold was eaten among the boulders. We have already read what the work was like. What kind of food—well, what kind could there have been in 1931–1933? (Anna Skripnikova reports that even in the Medvezhyegorsk mess hall for free voluntary employees they served only a murky dishwater with fish heads and individual millet grains.)[27] Their clothing was their own and was worn till it was worn out. And there was only one form of address, one form of urging them on, one refrain: "Come on! . . . Come on! . . . Come on! . . ."

They say that in the first winter, 1931–1932, 100,000 died off —a number equal to the number of those who made up the full working force on the canal. And why not believe it? More likely it is an understatement: in similar conditions in wartime camps a death rate of one percent per day was commonplace and common knowledge. So on Belomor 100,000 could have died off in

27. However, she recalls that refugees from the Ukraine came to Medvezhyegorsk in order to get work near the camp and by this means save themselves from starvation. The zeks called them over and *brought some of their own food from the camp compound for them to eat.* And all this is very likely. But not all were able to escape from the Ukraine.

just three months plus. And then there was another whole summer, and another winter.

D. P. Vitkovsky, a Solovetsky Islands veteran, who worked on the White Sea Canal as a work supervisor and saved the lives of many prisoners with that very same "tukhta," the falsification of work reports, draws a picture of the evenings:

At the end of the workday there were corpses left on the work site. The snow powdered their faces. One of them was hunched over beneath an overturned wheelbarrow, he had hidden his hands in his sleeves and frozen to death in that position. Someone had frozen with his head bent down between his knees. Two were frozen back to back leaning against each other. They were peasant lads and the best workers one could possibly imagine. They were sent to the canal in tens of thousands at a time, and the authorities tried to work things out so no one got to the same subcamp as his father; they tried to break up families. And right off they gave them norms of shingle and boulders that you'd be unable to fulfill even in summer. No one was able to teach them anything, to warn them; and in their village simplicity they gave all their strength to their work and weakened very swiftly and then froze to death, embracing in pairs. At night the sledges went out and collected them. The drivers threw the corpses onto the sledges with a dull clonk.

And in the summer bones remained from corpses which had not been removed in time, and together with the shingle they got into the concrete mixer. And in this way they got into the concrete of the last lock at the city of Belomorsk and will be preserved there forever.[28]

The Belomorstroi newspaper choked with enthusiasm in describing how many Canal Army Men, who had been "aesthetically carried away" by their great task, had in their own free time (and, obviously, without any payment in bread) decorated the canal banks with stones—simply for the sake of beauty.

Yes, and it was quite right for them to set forth on the banks of the canal the names of the six principal lieutenants of Stalin and Yagoda, the chief overseers of Belomor, six hired murderers each of whom accounted for thirty thousand lives: Firin—Berman—Frenkel—Kogan—Rappoport—Zhuk.

Yes, and they should have added there the Chief of VOKhR of BelBaltlag—Brodsky. Yes, and the Curator of the Canal representing VTsIK—Solts.

28. D. Vitkovsky, *Polzhizni* (*Half a Lifetime*).

Yes, and all thirty-seven Chekists who were at the canal. And the thirty-six writers who glorified Belomor.[20] And the dramatist Pogodin *should not be forgotten either.*

So that tourists on steamers would read and think about them.

But that's the rub. There are no tourists!

How can that be?

Just like that. And there are no steamers either. There is nothing there that goes on a schedule.

In 1966, when I was completing this book, I wanted to travel through the great Belomor, to see it for myself. Just so as to compete with those 120 others. But it was impossible. . . . There was nothing to make the trip on. I would have had to ask for passage on a freighter. And on such vessels they check your papers. And I have a name which had been attacked. There would immediately be suspicion: Why was I going? And, therefore, so that the book remained safe, it was wiser not to go.

But, nonetheless, I did poke around there a bit. First at Medvezhyegorsk. Even at the present time many of the barracks have still survived. Also a majestic hotel with a five-story glass tower. For after all, this was the gateway to the canal! After all, things would buzz here with Soviet and foreign visitors. . . . But it stayed empty forever and ever, and finally they turned it over to a boarding school.

The road to Povenets. Stunted woods. Stones at every step. Boulders.

From Povenets I reached the canal straightaway and walked along it for a long stretch, keeping as close as possible to the locks so as to look them over. Forbidden zones. Sleepy guards. But in some places things were clearly visible. The walls of the locks were just what they had been before, made from those very same rock-filled cribs. I could recognize them from their pictures. But Maslov's rhomboid gates had been replaced by metal gates and were no longer opened by hand.

But why was everything so quiet? There were no people about.

29. Including Aleksei N. Tolstoi, who, after he had traveled over the canal (for he had to pay for his position), "recounted with excitement and inspiration what he had seen, drawing attractive, almost fantastic, and at the same time realistic pictures of the prospects of the future of the region, putting into his narrative all the heat of his creative passion and writer's imagination. He literally bubbled with enthusiasm in speaking of the labor of the canal builders, of the *advanced technology* [my italics—A.S.]."

There was no traffic on the canal nor in the locks. There was no hustle and bustle of service personnel. There were no steamer whistles. The lock gates stayed shut. It was a fine serene June day. So why was it?

And so it was that I passed five locks of the Povenets "staircase," and after passing the fifth I sat down on the bank. Portrayed on all our "Belomor" cigarette packages, and so desperately needed by our country, why are you silent, Great Canal?

Someone in civilian clothing approached me with watchful eyes. So I played the simpleton: Where could I get some fish? Yes, and how could I leave via the canal? He turned out to be the chief of the locks guard. Why, I asked him, wasn't there any passenger traffic? Well—he acted astonished—how could we? After all, the Americans would rush right over to see it. Until the war there had been passenger traffic, but not since the war. Well, what if they did come and see it? Well, now, how could we let them see it? But why is no one traveling on it? They do. But not very many. You see, it is very shallow, sixteen feet deep. They wanted to rebuild it, but in all probability they will build another next to it, one which will be all right from the beginning.

You don't say, boss! We've long since known all about that: In 1934, no sooner had they finished passing out all the medals than there was already a project for reconstructing it. And point No. 1 was: to deepen the canal. And the second was: to build a deep-water chain of locks for seagoing ships parallel to the existing locks. Haste makes waste. Because of that *time limit* imposed on its completion, because of those *norms*, they not only cheated on the depth but reduced the tonnage capacity: there had to be some faked cubic feet in order to feed the sloggers. (And very soon afterward they blamed this cheating on the engineers and gave them new "tenners.") And fifty miles of the Murmansk Railroad had had to be moved to make room for the canal route. It was at least a good thing that they hadn't wasted any wheelbarrow wheels on the project. And what were they to haul on it anyway —and where? They had cut down all the nearby timber—so where was it to be hauled from? Was Archangel timber to be hauled to Leningrad? But it was sold right in Archangel; foreigners had been buying it there since long ago. Yes, for half the year the canal is frozen anyhow, maybe more. So what was it needed for anyway? Oh, yes, there was a military necessity: in order to be able to shift the fleet.

"It's so shallow," complained the chief of the guard, "that not even submarines can pass through it under their own power; they have to be loaded on barges, and only then can they be hauled through."

And what about the cruisers? Oh, you hermit-tyrant! You nighttime lunatic! In what nightmare did you dream up all this?

And where, cursed one, were you hurrying to? What was it that burned and pricked you—to set a deadline of twenty months? For those quarter-million men could have remained alive. Well, so the Esperantists stuck in your throat, but think how much work those peasant lads could have done for you! How many times you could have roused them to attack—for the Motherland, for Stalin!

"It was very costly," I said to the guard.

"But it was built very quickly!" he answered me with self-assurance.

Your bones should be in it!

That day I spent eight hours by the canal. During this time there was one self-propelled barge which passed from Povenets to Soroka, and one, identical in type, which passed from Soroka to Povenets. Their numbers were different, and it was only by their numbers that I could tell them apart and be sure that it was not the same one as before on its way back. Because they were loaded altogether identically: with the very same pine logs which had been lying exposed for a long time and were useless for anything except firewood.

And canceling the one load against the other we get zero.

And a quarter of a million to be remembered.

■

And after the White Sea–Baltic Canal came the Moscow-Volga Canal. The sloggers all moved over to it immediately, as well as Chief of Camp Firin, and Chief of Construction Kogan. (Their Orders of Lenin for Belomor reached both of them there.)

But this canal was at least needed. And it gloriously continued and developed all the traditions of Belomor, and we can understand even better here how the Archipelago in the period of rapid metastasis differed from stagnant Solovki. Now was the time to

remember and regret the silent cruelties of Solovki. For now they not only demanded work of the prisoners, they not only demanded that the prisoners break up the unyielding rocks with their failing picks. No, while taking away life, they even earlier crawled into the breast and searched the soul.

And this was the most difficult thing to bear on the canals: They demanded that in addition to everything else you *chirp*. You might be *on your last legs*, but you had to make a pretense of participation in public affairs. With a tongue growing numb from hunger you had to deliver speeches demanding overfulfillment of plan: and exposure of wreckers! And punishment for hostile propaganda, for *kulak* rumors (and all camp rumors were *kulak* rumors). And to be on the lookout to make sure that the snakes of mistrust did not entwine a new prison term about you.

Picking up these shameless books where the life of the doomed is portrayed so glossily and with such admiration, it is almost impossible to believe that they were written in all seriousness and also read in all seriousness. (Yes, and circumspect Glavlit destroyed the printings, so that in this case too we got one of the last existing copies.)

And now our Virgil will be the assiduous pupil of Vyshinsky, I. L. Averbakh.[30]

Even driving in a single screw takes at first some special effort: The axis must be kept straight, and the screw has to be kept from leaning to one side. But when it has already begun to take hold, one can then free one hand, and just keep screwing it in and whistling.

We read Vyshinsky: "Thanks in particular to its educational task, our Corrective Labor Camp (ITL) is fundamentally counterposed to the bourgeois prison where raw violence reigns."[31] "In contrast to bourgeois states, the use of violence in the struggle against crime plays a role of secondary importance, and the center of gravity has passed over to organizational-material, cultural-educational, and political-indoctrinational measures."[32] (You really have to furrow your brains not to burst out: Instead of the club—the *ration* scale, plus propa-

30. Averbakh, *op. cit.*
31. Vyshinsky's preface to the collection *Ot Tyurem . . . . op. cit.*
32. Vyshinsky's preface to Averbakh's book.

ganda.) And here is some more: ". . . the successes of socialism also exercise their magical [! that's what's sculpted there: magical!] influence on . . . the struggle against crime."[33]

Following in his teacher's footsteps, Averbakh similarly elaborates: The task of Soviet corrective-labor policy is "the transformation of *the nastiest human material* [Do you remember *raw material?* Do you remember *insects?*—A.S.] into worthwhile, fully useful, active, and conscientious builders of socialism."

There is just the question of that little coefficient: a quarter-million of nasty material lay down and died, and 12,500 of the active and conscientious were liberated ahead of time (Belomor). . . .

Yes, and wasn't it back at the Eighth Party Congress in 1919, when the Civil War was still blazing, when they were still waiting for Denikin near Orel, when Kronstadt and the Tambov revolt were still in the future, that the Congress declared and determined: to replace the system of punishments (in other words, in general not to punish anyone at all?) with a system of *education*?

"Compulsory," Averbakh now adds. And rhetorically (already saving up for us the annihilating reply) he asks: But *how else?* How can one remake consciousness for the benefit of socialism if in freedom it has already become hostile to it, and camp compulsion is perceived as violence and can only intensify the hostility?

So we and the reader are caught in a blind alley—is it not true?

But that's not the end of it, and now he is going to dazzle us blind: productive, meaningful labor with *a high purpose!*—that's the means by which all hostile or unreliable consciousness will be remade. And for that, it seems, we need "to concentrate our work on gigantic projects which astound the imagination with their grandeur." (Ah, so that's it, that's why we needed Belomor, and we dunderheads didn't understand a thing!) By this means are attained "immediacy, effectiveness, and the pathos of construction." And at the same time "work from zero to completion" is obligatory, and "every camp inmate" (who is not yet dead as of today) "feels the political resonance of his personal labor, the interest of the entire country in his work."

Please notice how smoothly the screw is now going in.

33. *Ibid.*

Perhaps it is a bit crooked, but are we not losing the capacity to resist it? The Father marked a line on the map with his pipe, and is there some anxiety about justifying him? An Averbakh always turns up: "Andrei Yanuaryevich, here is an idea I've had. What do you think about it? Should I develop it in a book?"

But those are only frills. What was required was that the prisoner, while still confined in camp, "be indoctrinated in the highest socialist forms of labor."

And what was required for that? The screw had gotten stuck. What muddle-headedness! Of course, *socialist competition* and *the shock-worker movement!* (Illustration No. 22.) What millennium is it, darlings, out of doors? "Not just work, but heroic work!" (OGPU Order No. 190.)

Competition for temporary possession of the red banner of the central staff! Of the district staff! Of the division staff! Competition between camps, construction sites, brigades! "Along with the transferable red banner a brass band was also awarded! For whole days at a time it played for the winners during work periods and during periods of tasty food!" (Illustration No. 26: There is no tasty food to be seen in the photograph, but you can see the searchlight. That was for night work. The Moscow-Volga Canal was constructed around the clock.)[84] In every brigade of prisoners there was a "troika" concerned with competition. Audit—and resolutions! Resolutions—and audit! The results of the storm assault on the watershed for the first five-day period! For the second! The intercamp newspaper was called *Perekovka—Reforging.* Its slogan was: "*Let us drown our past on the bottom of the canal.*" Its appeal: "Work without days off!" Universal enthusiasm, universal agreement! The leading shock worker said: "Of course! How can there be days off? *The Volga doesn't have . . . days off,* and it's just about to overflow its banks." And what about days off on the Mississippi? Grab him, he's a kulak agent! A point in the obligations undertaken: "Preservation of health by every member of the

34. A band was used in other camps as well: they put it on the shore and it played for several days in a row until prisoners working without relief or rest periods had unloaded timber from a barge. I.D.T. was in a band at Belomor and he recalls: The band aroused anger among those working (after all, the musicians were released from general work, had their own individual cots and their own military uniform). They used to shout at us: "Parasites, drones! Come here and get to work!" In the photograph neither this nor anything like it is shown.

collective." Oh, what humanitarianism! No, here's what it was for: "to reduce the amount of absenteeism." "Do not be ill, and do not take time off." Red bulletin boards. Black bulletin boards. Bulletin boards of charts: days remaining until completion; work done yesterday, work done today. The honor roll. In every barracks, honor certificates, "a bulletin board of reforging" (Illustration No. 23), graphs, diagrams. (And how many loafers were scurrying about and writing all this stuff!) Every prisoner had to be informed about the production plans! And every prisoner had to be informed about the entire political life of the country! Therefore at morning line-up (taken out of morning free time, of course) there was a "five-minute production session," and after returning to camp, when one's legs could hardly keep one upright, there was a "five-minute political session." During lunch hours prisoners were not to be allowed to crawl into nooks and crannies or to sleep—there were "political readings." If out in freedom the "Six Conditions of Comrade Stalin" were proclaimed, then every camp inmate had to learn them by heart.[35] If in freedom there was a decree of the Council of People's Commissars on dismissing workers for absenteeism, then here explanatory work had to be undertaken: Every person who today refuses to work or who simulates illness must, after his liberation, be *branded with the contempt of the masses* of the Soviet Union. The system here was this: In order to get the title of shock worker it was not enough merely to have production successes! It was necessary, in addition: (a) to read the newspapers; (b) *to love your canal;* (c) to be able to talk about its significance.

And miracle! Oh, miracle! Oh, transfiguration and ascension! The "shock worker ceases to feel discipline and labor as something which has been forced on him from outside." (Even horses understand this: Illustration No. 24.) "It becomes an *inner necessity!*" (Well, truly, of course, freedom, after all, is not freedom, but accepted bars!) New socialist forms of reward! The issuing of shock workers' buttons. And what

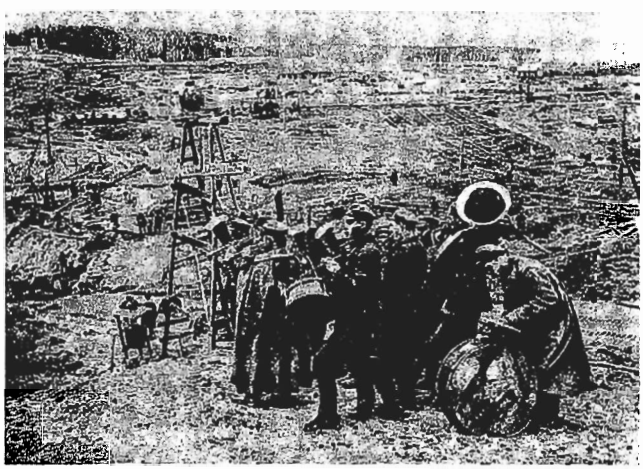
35. It is worth noting that intellectuals who had managed *to make their way up* to positions in management took advantage of these Six Conditions very adroitly. "To make use of specialists by every possible means" meant to yank engineers off *general work*. "Not to permit turnover in the work force" meant to prohibit prisoner transports!

22. Barracks posters:
"Complete the canal!"

23. "For a better life, for a happier life!"

24. "Even the horse doesn't need the whip!"

25. Beneath the storm



26. A brass band at the canal

would you have thought, what would you have thought? "The shock worker's button is valued by the sloggers *more highly than rations!*" Yes, more highly than rations! And whole brigades "voluntarily go out to work *two hours before line-up.*" (What presumption! But what was the convoy to do?) "And they also stayed behind to work after the end of the workday."

Oh, flame! Oh, matches! They thought you would burn for decades.

Here it is: shock work! (Illustration No. 25.) A thunderstorm breaks, but we are going to work anyway! We are going to overfulfill the day's plan! Remark the technology. We spoke of it at the Belomor too: on the slopes a hookman hauls the wheelbarrow from the front—indeed, how else could it be made to roll upward? Ivan Nemtsev suddenly *decided* to do the work of *five men!* No sooner said than done: he moved seventy-two cubic yards of earth in one shift.[36] (Let us calculate: that is six and a half cubic yards per hour, one cubic yard every nine minutes. Just try it, even with the lightest type of soil!) This was the situation: there were no pumps, no wells had been readied—and water had to be fought off with one's hands![37] And what about the women? They used to lift, unaided, stones of up to a hundred and fifty pounds![38] Wheelbarrows overturned and stones struck head and feet. That's all right, we'll *manage!* Sometimes "up to their waists in water," sometimes "sixty-two hours of unbroken work," sometimes "for three days five hundred persons hacked at the frozen earth," and it turned out to be to no avail. That's all right, we'll *manage.*

> With our battle spades
> We dug our happiness near Moscow!

This was that same "special, gay tension" they had brought with them from Belomor. "They went on the attack with boisterous gay songs."

> In any weather
> March out to line-up!

36. Kuzemko, *op. cit.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. The leaflet *Kanaloarmeika* (*The Canal Army Woman*), Dmitlag, 1935. (Not to be taken beyond the boundaries of the camp!)

27. Shock brigade

28. Meeting of a shock brigade

And here are the *shock workers* themselves (Illustration No. 27). They have come to the rally. On one side, by the train, is the chief of convoy, and on the left there is one more convoy guard. Look at their inspired and happy faces; these women do not think about children nor about home but only about the canal which they have come to love so. It is quite cold, and some are in felt boots, some in ordinary boots, homemade of course, and the second from the left in the first row is a woman thief in stolen shoes, and where better to go swaggering about in them than at the rally? And here is another rally (Illustration No. 28). It says on the poster, "We will build it ahead of time, cheaply and strong." And how do we reconcile all that? Well, let the engineers break their heads over it. It is easy to see in the photograph that there are shadows of smiles for the camera, but in general these women are terribly fatigued. They are not going to make speeches. And all they expect from the rally is a nourishing meal for once. All of them have simple peasant-like faces.[39] And the trusty guard got stuck in the aisle. The Judas, he so much wanted to get into that photograph. And here is a shock brigade, provided with the last word in equipment (Illustration No. 30). It is not true that we haul everything under our own steam! If we are to believe the camp artists whose works were exhibited in the KVCh—the Cultural and Educational Section—(Illustrations Nos. 29 and 31), then this is the equipment already in use at the canal: one excavator, one crane, and one tractor. Are they in working order? Perhaps they are broken down; isn't that more likely? Well, generally speaking, in winter it isn't very cozy out on the construction site, right?

There was one small additional problem: "At the time Belomor was completed too many triumphant articles appeared in various newspapers, and they nullified the terrorizing effect of the camps. . . . In the description of Belomor they overdid it to such a degree that those who arrived at the Moscow-Volga Canal expected rivers of milk and honey and presented *unheard-of* demands to the administration." (Presumably they asked for clean linen?) So that was it: Go ahead and lie as much as you

39. All these photographs are from Averbakh's book. He warned that there were no photographs of kulaks and wreckers in it (in other words, of the finest peasants and intellectuals). Evidently, so to speak, "their time has not yet come." Alas, it never will. You can't bring back the dead.

29. Winter on the canal (painting by camp artist)

30. Women's shock brigade

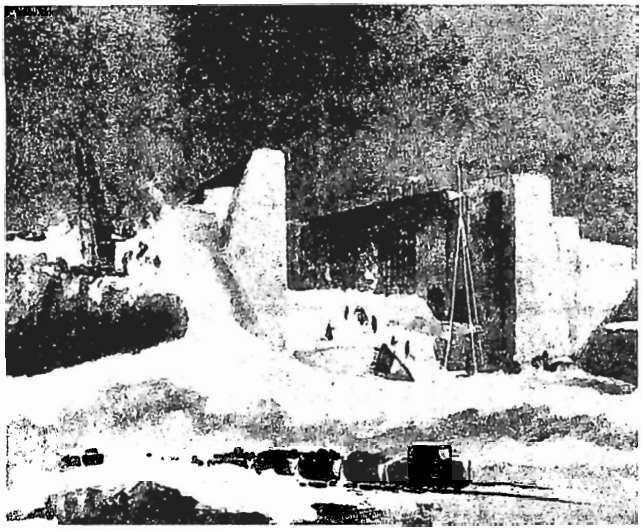
please, but don't get entangled in your lying. "Today, too, the banner of Belomor waves over us," writes the newspaper *Reforging*. That's a moderate statement. And it is quite enough.

In any event, both at Belomor and at the Moscow-Volga Canal they understood that "camp competition and the shock-worker movement must be tied in *with the entire system of rewards*" so that the special rewards would *stimulate* the shock-worker movement. "The principal basis of competition is *material incentive*." (!?!? It would seem we've been thrown about-face? We have turned from East to West? One hundred eighty degrees? Is this a provocation! Hold tight to the handrails! The car is going through!) And things worked out like this: On production indices depended . . . nutrition and housing and clothing and linen and the frequency of baths! (Yes, yes, whoever works badly can go about in tatters and lice!) And liberation ahead of time! And rest days! And visits! For example, issuing a shock worker's lapel button is a purely socialist form of encouragement. But let that button confer the right to a long visit out of turn! And by this means it becomes more precious than *bread rations*.

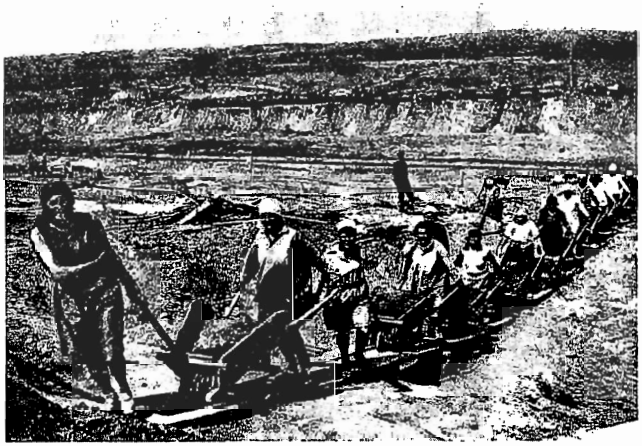
"If in freedom, in accordance with the Soviet Constitution, we apply the principle of *whoever does not work does not eat*, then why should we put the camp inmates in a *privileged* position?" (The most difficult thing in organizing a camp: they must not become privileged places!) The ration scale at Dmitlag was this: The penalty ration consisted of muddy water and ten and a half ounces of bread. One hundred percent fulfillment of norm earned the right to twenty-eight ounces of bread and the right to *buy* in addition three and a half ounces in the camp commissary. And then "submission to discipline begins out of egotistical motives (self-interest in getting a better bread ration) and *rises* to the second step of socialist self-interest in the red banner."[40]

But the main thing was time off sentence! Time off sentence! The socialist competition headquarters compiles a report on the prisoner. For time off sentence not only overfulfillment of plan is required, but also *social work*. And anyone who in the past has been a nonworking element gets reduced time off sentence, miserly small. "Such a person can only pretend, not reform! He must be kept in camp *longer* so as to be verified." (For example,

40. In his private life Averbakh probably began immediately with the second step.



31. Winter on the canal (painting)



32. "Volunteers"

he pushes a wheelbarrow uphill—and maybe he isn't working, but just pretending?)

And what do those who were freed ahead of time do? What do you mean, what? *They stay with the project.* They have come to love the canal too much to leave it! "They are so absorbed in it that when they are liberated they *voluntarily* stay at the canal, engaging in earth-moving operations right to the end of the project." (They voluntarily remain at work like that. As, for example, in Illustration No. 32. Can one believe the author? Of course. After all, they all have a stamp in their passport: "Was in OGPU camps." You aren't going to find work anywhere else.)[41]

But what is this? The machinery for producing nightingale trills has suddenly broken down—and in the intermission we hear the weary breath of truth: "Even the thieves were only 60 percent involved in competition. [It is pretty bad if even the thieves don't compete!] The camp inmates often interpret the special benefits and rewards as incorrectly applied"; "recommendations of prisoners are often composed tritely"; "very often trusties pass themselves off on recommendations [!] as shock-worker excavators and receive a shock worker's time off sentence while the real shock worker often gets none."[42] (And so it would seem, gentlemen instructors, that it was *you* who had not managed to rise to the second step?); "and there were many [!] who clung to feelings of hopelessness and injustice."[43]

But the trills have begun again, with a metallic ring. The main incentive had evidently been forgotten: "cruel and merciless application of disciplinary penalties!" OGPU Order of November

41. Averbakh, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

42. In our country everything is topsy-turvy, and even rewards sometimes turn out to be a misfortune. The blacksmith Paramonov received two years off his ten-year sentence in one of the Archangel camps for the excellence of his work. But because of this two-year reduction, he completed his term during wartime, and as a result, being a 58, he was not released, but was kept there "under special decree" (*special*, once again). Just as soon as the war was over Paramonov's codefendants, convicted with him in the same case, completed their ten-year sentences and were released. And he dragged out another whole year. The prosecutor studied his case and couldn't do a thing: "the special decree" remained in force throughout the entire Archipelago.

43. Well, and in 1931 the Fifth Conference of Justice Officials condemned this whole snakepit: "The widespread and totally unjustified application of parole and time off sentence for workdays . . . leads to *diminution of the impact* of *sentences*, to the undermining *of the repression* of crime, and to distortions *in the class line*."

28, 1933. (This was at the beginning of winter, so they would stand still without rocking back and forth!) "All incorrigible loafers and malingerers are to be sent to distant northern camps with total deprivation of rights to any privileges. Malicious strikers and troublemakers are to be turned over to trial by camp collegia. For the slightest attempt to violate iron discipline prisoners are to be deprived of all special privileges and advantages already received." (For example, for attempting to get warm beside the fire.)

And, nonetheless, we have again omitted the main link—total confusion! We have said everything, but we didn't say the main thing! Listen! Listen! "*Collectivity* is both the principle and the method of Soviet corrective-labor policy." After all, there have to be "*driving belts* from the administration to the masses!" "Only by basing itself on collectives can the multitudinous camp administration rework the consciousness of the prisoners." "From the lowest forms of collective responsibility to the highest forms is a matter of honor, a matter of glory, a matter of valor and heroism!" (We often abuse our language, claiming that with the passage of the ages it has grown pale. But if one really thinks about this, it is not true! It becomes more noble. Earlier, in the manner of cabmen, we said "reins." And now "driving belts"! It used to be called "mutual back-scratching": You help me out of the ditch and I'll help you out of the swamp—but that smells of the stable too. And now it's collective responsibility!)

"The brigade is the basic form of re-education." (A Dmitlag order, 1933.) "This means *trust in the collective,* which is impossible under capitalism!" (But which is quite possible under feudalism: one man in the village is at fault, strip them all and whip them! Nonetheless it sounds noble: Trust in the collective!) "That means the *spontaneous initiative* of the camp inmates in the cause of re-education!" "This is *psychological enrichment* of the personality by the collective!" (No, what words, what words! After all, he's knocked us right down with this *psychological enrichment!* Now there's a real scholar for you!) "The collective *heightens* the feeling of human *dignity* [yes, yes!] of every prisoner and by this means *hinders* the introduction of a system of moral *repression.*"

And, indeed, please tell me: thirty years after Averbakh, it was my fate to say a word or so about the brigade—all I did was

describe how things work there; but people managed to understand me in quite the opposite sense, in a distorted way: "The brigade is the basic contribution of Communism to the science of punishment. [And that is quite right, that is precisely what Averbakh is saying.] . . . It is a collective organism, living, working, eating, sleeping, and suffering together in pitiless and forced symbiosis."[44]

Oh, without the brigade one could still somehow manage to survive the camp! Without the brigade you are an individual, you yourself choose your own line of conduct. Without the brigade you can at least die proudly, but in the brigade the only way they allow you even to die is in humiliation, on your belly. From the chief, from the camp foreman, from the jailer, from the convoy guard, from all of them you can hide and catch a moment of rest; you can ease up a bit here on hauling, shirk a bit there on lifting. But from *the driving belts*, from your comrades in the brigade, there is neither a hiding place, nor salvation, nor mercy. You cannot *not want* to work. You cannot, conscious of being a political, prefer death from hunger to work. No! Once you have been marched outside the compound, once you have been registered as going out to work, everything the brigade does today will be divided not by twenty-five but by twenty-six, and because of you the entire brigade's percentage of norm will fall from 123 to 119, which makes the difference between the ration allotted record breakers and ordinary rations, and everyone will lose a millet cake and three and a half ounces of bread. And that is why your comrades keep watch on you better than any jailers! And the brigade leader's fist will punish you far more effectively than the whole People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs.

Now that is what *spontaneous initiative in re-education* means! That is *psychological enrichment of the personality by the collective!*

So now it is all as transparent as a windowpane, yet on the Moscow-Volga Canal even the organizers themselves still did not dare believe what a strong dog collar they had found. And there the *brigade* was kept in the background, and the *labor collective* was elevated to the position of highest honor and incentive. Even in May, 1934, half the zeks in Dmitlag were still

44. Ernst Pawel, "The Triumph of Survival," *The Nation*, February 2, 1963.

"unorganized"; *they were not accepted in* the *labor collectives*! They did take them into *labor cooperatives,* but not all of them: they did not take in priests, sectarians, or other religious believers (unless they renounced their religion—the game was worth the candle—in which case they were accepted with one month's probation). They began to take 58's into the labor collectives unwillingly, but only those whose terms were less than five years. The collective had a chairman, a council, and the democracy there was quite unbridled: the meetings of the collective took place only with the permission of the KVCh—the Cultural and Educational Section—and only in the presence of the company (yes, indeed, they had companies too!) instructor. It goes without saying that the collectives were given higher rations than the mob: the best collectives had vegetable gardens allotted to them in the compound (not to individual people, but, as on a collective farm, to supplement the common pot). The collective split into sections, and every free hour was filled with either checking the daily living routine or inquests into thefts and the squandering of government property, of publication of a wall newspaper, or delving into disciplinary violations. At the meetings of the collectives they spent hours in pretentious discussion of such questions as: How to *reforge* lazybones Vovka? Or Grishka, the malingerer? The collective itself had the right to expel its own members and *ask that they be deprived of time off sentence,* but, as a more drastic measure, the administration could dissolve entire collectives which were "continuing criminal traditions." (Which were not, in other words, immersed in collective life?) However, the most entertaining were the periodic *purges* of the collectives—of loafers, of the unworthy, of *whisperers* (who depicted the labor collectives as organizations for spying on one another), and of agents of the class enemy who had crept into their midst. For example, it was discovered that someone, already in camp, was concealing his kulak descent (for which he had, in fact, been sent to camp in the first place), and so now he was branded and purged—purged not from the camp but from the labor collective. (Realist artists! Please paint that picture: "The purge in the labor collective!" Those shaven heads, those watchful expressions, those fatigued faces, those rags on the body—and those enraged orators! Right here is a prototype [Illustration No. 33]. And for those who find it hard to imagine, well, this sort of thing took place in freedom too. And in China.)

33. Labor collective

And listen to this: "As a preliminary, *the task and the purposes of the purge were communicated* to every camp inmate. And at that point every member of the collective gave public accounting."[45]

And then, too, there was *exposure of fake shock workers*! And elections of the cultural council! And official rebukes to those who had done poorly at liquidating their illiteracy! And there were the classes in liquidation of illiteracy too: "We-are-not-slaves! Slaves-we-are-not!" And the songs too?

> This kingdom of swamps and lowlands
> Will become our happy native land.

Or, in the masterful words of Nikolai Aseyev, the poet himself:

> We Canal Army Men are a tough people,
> But not in that lies our chief trait;
> We were caught up by a great epoch
> To be put on the path that leads straight.

45. All the citations not otherwise credited are from Averbakh's book. But sometimes I have combined phrases from different places, sometimes passed over his intolerable prolixity. After all, he had to stretch it out into a dissertation. But we don't have the space. However, I have nowhere distorted the meaning.

Or, at the amateur theatricals, bursting from the breast:

> And even the most beautiful song
> Cannot tell, no, cannot do justice
> To this country than which there is nothing more wondrous,
> The country in which you and I live.[46]

Now that is what *to chirp* means in camp slang.

Oh, they will drive you to the point where you will weep just to be back with company commander Kurilko, walking along the short and simple execution road, through open-and-above-board Solovki slavery.

My Lord! What canal is there deep enough for us to drown *that* past in?

46. Song books of Dmitlag, 1935. And the music was called *Canal Army Music*, and there were free composers on the competition committee: Shostakovich, Kabalevsky, Shekhter. . . .

Chapter 4

■

The Archipelago Hardens

And the clock of history was striking.

In 1934, at the January Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the Soviet Communist Party, the Great Leader (having already in mind, no doubt, how many he would soon *have to do away with*) declared that the *withering away* of the state (which had been awaited virtually from 1920 on) would arrive via, believe it or not, the maximum *intensification* of state power!

This was so unexpectedly brilliant that it was not given to every little mind to grasp it, but Vyshinsky, ever the loyal apprentice, immediately picked it up: "And this means the maximum *strengthening* of corrective-labor institutions."[1]

Entry into socialism via the maximum strengthening of prison! And this was not some satirical magazine cracking a joke either, but was said by the Prosecutor General of the Soviet Union! And thus it was that the iron grip of the Yezhov terror was prepared even without Yezhov.

After all, the Second Five-Year Plan—and who remembers this? (for no one in our country ever remembers anything, for memory is the Russians' weak spot, especially memory of the bad)—the Second Five-Year Plan included among its glistening (and to this very day unfulfilled) goals the following: "the uprooting of the vestiges of capitalism from people's consciousness." This meant that this process of uprooting had to be finished by

1. Vyshinsky, *op. cit.*, Preface.

1938. Judge for yourself: by what means were these vestiges to be so swiftly uprooted?

"Soviet places of confinement on the threshold of the Second Five-Year Plan not only are not losing but are even gaining in significance." (Not one year had passed since Kogan's prediction that camps would soon cease to exist at all. But Kogan did not know about the January Plenum!) "In the epoch of entrance into socialism the role of corrective-labor institutions as weapons of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as organs of repression, as means of compulsion and education [compulsion is already in the first place!] must *grow still further* and be strengthened."[2] (For otherwise what was to happen to the command corps of the NKVD? Was it just supposed to disappear?)

So who is going to reproach our Progressive Doctrine with having fallen behind practice? All this was printed in black on white, but we still didn't know how to read. The year 1937 was publicly predicted and provided with a foundation.

And the hairy hand tossed out all the frills and gewgaws too. Labor collectives? Prohibited! What nonsense was that—self-government in camp! You couldn't think up anything better than the brigade anyway. What's all this about political indoctrination periods? Forget it! The prisoners are sent there to work and they don't have to understand anything. At Ukhta they had proclaimed the "liquidation of the last multiple bunk"? This was a political mistake—were the prisoners to be put to bed on cots with springs? Cram them on the bunks twice as thickly! *Time off sentences?* Abolish that before anything! What do you want—that the court's work should go for nothing? And what about those who already have credits toward time off sentence? Consider them canceled! (1937.) They are still permitting visits in some camps? Forbid them everywhere. Some prison or other permitted a priest's body to be turned over for burial outside prison? You must be insane! You are providing an opportunity for anti-Soviet demonstrations. There must be an exemplary punishment for this! And make it clear: the corpses of deceased prisoners belong to Gulag, and the location of graves is top-secret. Professional and technical courses for prisoners? Dissolve them! They should have done their studying in freedom. And what about VTsIK—what VTsIK

2. *Ibid.*, p. 449. One of the authors, Apeter, was the new Chief of Gulag.

anyway? Over Kalinin's signature? And we don't have a GPU, we have an NKVD. When they return to freedom, let them study on their own. Graphs, diagrams? Tear them off the wall and whitewash the walls. And you don't even have to whitewash them. And what kind of payroll is this? Wages for prisoners? A GUM-Zak circular dated November 25, 1926: 25 percent of the wages of a worker of equivalent skill in state industry? Shut up, and tear it up! We are robbing ourselves of wages! A prisoner should be paid? Let him say thank you he wasn't shot. The Corrective Labor Code of 1933? Forget it once and for all; take it out of all camp safes. "Every violation of nationwide codes on labor . . . only on the basis of agreement with the Central Council of Trade Unions—the VTsSPS"? Do you really think *we* are going to go to the VTsSPS? What's the VTsSPS anyway? All we have to do is spit on it and it will blow away! Article 75: "The rations are to be increased for heavier labor"? About face! Rations are to be reduced for easier work. Just like that, and the food allotment is intact.

The Corrective Labor Code with its hundreds of articles was swallowed up as if by a shark; and not only was it true that for twenty-five years afterward no one caught a glimpse of it, but even its name was unsuspected.

They shook up the Archipelago, and they became convinced that beginning back there with Solovki, and even more so during the period of the canals, the entire camp machinery had become intolerably loose. And now they got rid of all that weakness.

In the very first place, the whole *guard system* was no good. These weren't real camps at all; they had guards posted on the watchtowers only at night, and at the gatehouse there was just one unarmed guard, who could even be persuaded to let one out for a bit. They were still permitting kerosene lighting around the perimeter. And several dozen prisoners were being taken to work outside the camp by just a single rifleman. So now they wired the perimeter for electric light (using politically reliable electricians and motor mechanics). The riflemen of the guard were provided with battle statutes and military training. Attack-trained German shepherds were included in the required service staffs, with their own breeders and trainers, and their own separate statutes. The camps began to assume, at long last, a fully modern, contemporary appearance, which we know very well indeed.

This is not the place to list the many small details of daily life in which the camp regimen was made stricter and tightened up. And the many cracks that were discovered via which *freedom* could still observe the Archipelago. All those ties were now broken off, and the cracks were filled in, and the last few "observers' commissions" were expelled.[3] (At the same time the

3. There is not going to be any other place in this book for an explanation of what these were. So let this be a lengthy note for those curious about it.

Hypocritical bourgeois society thought up the idea of inspection of conditions in places of confinement and of the course of prisoner correction. In Tsarist Russia "the societies of guardianship over prisons"—"for the improvement of the physical and moral state of the prisoners"—were the charitable prison committees and the societies of prison patronage. In American prisons, commissions of observers, consisting of public representatives, already possessed broad rights in the twenties and thirties, including even the right of release ahead of term (not petitioning for it, but release itself, without action by a court). And indeed our dialectical legal experts pointedly protest: "One must not forget *what classes* the commissions represent. They reach decisions in accordance with their class interests."

It is quite a different thing here in our country. The very first "Temporary Instruction" of July 23, 1918, which created the first camps, provided for the creation of "*assignment commissions*" attached to Provincial Penal Departments. They assigned all sentenced prisoners one of *seven* different types of confinement, which had been established in the early Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. This work (which apparently replaced that of the courts) was so important that the People's Commissariat of Justice in its report of 1920 called the activity of the assignment commissions "the nerve center of penal operations." Their makeup was very democratic; in 1922, for example, it was a *troika*: the Chief of the Provincial NKVD Administration, a member of the Presidium of the Provincial Court, and the Chief of Places of Confinement in the specific province. Later on one person was added from the Provincial Workers' and Peasants' Inspection and the Provincial Trade Union Council. But as early as 1929 there was great dissatisfaction with the commissions: they exercised their power to release prisoners before the end of term and to grant other benefits to hostile-class elements. "This was the rightist-opportunist practice of the NKVD leadership." For this reason, assignment commissions were abolished in that selfsame year of the Great Turning Point and in their place *observers'* commissions were created whose chairmen were *judges*, and whose members consisted of the chief of the camp, the prosecutor, and a representative of the *public*—from *workers in penal institutions*, the *police*, the district executive committee, or the Komsomol. And as our jurists pointedly declared: "One must not forget what classes—" Oh, excuse me, I have already quoted that. . . . And the observers' commissions were entrusted with these tasks: by the NKVD, to decide the question of time off sentences and release before the end of term, and by VTsIK (so to speak, by parliament), *to verify the fulfillment of the production and financial plans.*

And it was these observers' commissions which were abolished at the beginning of the Second Five-Year Plan. Speaking frankly, none of the prisoners sighed over the loss.

Another thing about classes now that we've mentioned them: one of the authors of that same collection we have cited so often before, Shestakova, on the basis of materials from the twenties and the beginning of the thirties, "reached a strange conclusion as to the similarity of the social origins of prisoners in bourgeois prisons and in our country." To her surprise it turned out

camp *phalanxes*—even though there seem to have been glimmerings of socialism in them—were renamed *columns* so as to distinguish them from Franco's.) The camp Security Section, which, up to this time, had had to make allowances for the goals of the general productive work and of the plan, now acquired its own self-contained dominating significance, to the detriment of all kinds of productive work and of any staff of specialists. True, they did not drive out the camp Cultural and Educational Sections, but this was partly because it was convenient to collect denunciations and summon stool pigeons through them.

And an iron curtain descended around the Archipelago. No one other than the officers and sergeants of the NKVD could enter and leave via the camp gatehouse. That harmonious order of things was established which the zeks themselves would soon come to consider the only conceivable one, the one we will describe in this part of this book—without the red ribbons by this time, and containing much more "labor" than "correction."

And that is when the wolf's fangs were bared! And that is when the bottomless pit of the Archipelago gaped wide!

"I'll shoe you in tin cans, but you're going to go out to work!"

"If there aren't enough railroad ties, I'll make one out of you!"

And that is when, sending freight trains through Siberia with a machine gun on the roof of every third car, they drove the 58's into excavation pits to guard them more securely. And that was when, even before the first shot of World War II, back when all Europe still danced fox trots, they could not manage to crush the lice in the Mariinsk *distributor* (the intercamp transit prison of the Mariinsk Camps) and brushed them off the clothes with whisk brooms. Typhus broke out, and in one short period fifteen thousand corpses were thrown into a ditch—curled up and naked, since even their underpants had been cut off them to be preserved for future use. (We have already recalled the typhus which raged at the Vladivostok Transit Camp.)

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that both there and here those in prison were . . . workers. Well, of course, there has to be some kind of dialectical explanation here, but she couldn't find any. And we will add on our own behalf that this "strange resemblance" was violated only in a minor degree in 1937–1938 when high state officials flocked into the camps. But very soon the proportions evened out. All the multimillion waves of the war and the postwar period consisted only of waves of *the working classes.*

And there was only one of its new acquisitions of the recent past that Gulag did not part with: the encouragement of the hoodlums, the thieves (the blatnye). Even more consistently than before, the thieves were given all the "commanding heights" in camp. Even more consistently than before, the thieves were egged on against the 58's, permitted to plunder them without any obstacles, to beat, to choke. The thieves became just like an internal camp police, camp storm troopers. (During the war years in many camps the custodial staffs were cut back to almost nothing and their work was entrusted to the *commandant's headquarters*, meaning to "the thieves who had become bitches," to the *bitches* —and the bitches were more effective than any custodial staff: after all, there was no prohibition against their beating.)

They say that in February–March, 1938, a secret instruction was circulated in the NKVD: *Reduce the number of prisoners.* (And not by releasing them, of course.) I do not see anything in the least impossible here: this was a logical instruction because there was simply not enough housing, clothing, or food. Gulag was grinding to a halt from exhaustion.

And this was when the pellagra victims lay down and died en masse. This was when the chiefs of convoy began to test the accuracy of machine-gun fire by shooting at the stumbling zeks. And this was when every morning the orderlies hauled the corpses to the gatehouse, stacking them there.

In the Kolyma, that pole of cold and cruelty in the Archipelago, that very same about-face took place with a sharpness worthy of a pole.

According to the recollections of Ivan Semyonovich Karpunich-Braven (former commander of the 40th Division and of the XII Corps, who recently died with his notes incomplete and scattered), a most dreadfully cruel system of food, work, and punishment was established in the Kolyma. The prisoners were so famished that at Zarosshy Spring they ate the corpse of a horse which had been lying dead for more than a week and which not only stank but was covered with flies and maggots. At Utiny Goldfields the zeks ate half a barrel of lubricating grease, brought there to grease the wheelbarrows. At Mylga they ate Iceland moss, like the deer. And when the passes were shut by snowdrifts, they used to issue three and a half ounces of bread a day at the distant goldfields, without ever making up for previous deficiencies. Multitudes of "goners," unable to walk by themselves, were

dragged to work on sledges by other "goners" who had not yet become quite so weak. Those who lagged behind were beaten with clubs and torn by dogs. Working in 50 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, they were forbidden to build fires and warm themselves. (The thieves were allowed this.) Karpunich himself also tried "cold drilling by hand" with a steel drill six and a half feet long, and hauling so-called "peat" (soil with broken stone and boulders) at 60 degrees below zero on sledges to which four men were hitched (the sledges were made of raw lumber, and the boxes on top were made of raw slab); a fifth accompanied them, a thief-*expediter*, "responsible for fulfillment of the plan," who kept beating them with a stave. Those who did not fulfill the norm (and what does it mean—those who did not fulfill?—because, after all, the production of the 58's was always "stolen" by the thieves) were punished by the chief of the camp, Zeldin, in this way: In winter he ordered them to strip naked in the mine shaft, poured cold water over them, and in this state they had to run to the compound; in summer they were forced to strip naked, their hands were tied behind them to a common pole, and they were left out, tied there, under a cloud of mosquitoes. (The guard was covered by a mosquito net.) Then, finally, they were simply beaten with a rifle butt and tossed into an isolator.

Some will object that there was nothing new in all this and no *development*—that this was a mere primitive return from the noisily educational canals to the directness of Solovki. Bah! But perhaps this was a Hegelian triad: Solovki-Belomor-Kolyma? Thesis, antithesis, synthesis? The negation of a negation, but enriched?

For example, here are *the death carriages*, which, so far as can be learned, did not exist on Solovki. This is according to the recollections of Karpunich at Marisny Spring (forty-one miles along the Srednekan trail). For an entire ten-day period the chief tolerated nonfulfillment of the norm. Only on the tenth day did he imprison in the isolator on a penalty ration those who had failed to fulfill and then had them taken out to work again. But whoever did not fulfill the norm, even in these circumstances, was given the *carriage*—a frame of sixteen by ten by six feet on a tractor sledge, made of rough beams, fastened together with construction staples. A small door, no windows, and inside nothing at all, not even any bed boards. In the evening those to be punished, sunk into a torpor and already indifferent, were taken from

the penalty isolator and packed into the carriage, locked in there with an enormous lock, and hauled off by tractor to a vale two to three miles from the camp. Several of those inside cried out, but the tractor unhitched them and left them there for a day. After a day it was unlocked and the corpses were tossed out. The winter storms would bury them.

At Mylga (a subordinate camp of Elgen), under Chief Gavrik, the punishments for women who failed to fulfill the norm were lighter: simply an unheated tent in winter (but one was allowed to go outside and run around it), and at haying time under the mosquitoes—an unprotected wattle shack (the recollections of Sliozberg).

The intensification of the cruelty of the Kolyma regime was outwardly marked by the fact that Garanin was made the chief of USVitlag (the Administration of Northeastern Camps), and that the Divisional Commander of the Latvian Riflemen, E. Berzin, was replaced as head of Dalstroi by Pavlov. (Incidentally, this totally unnecessary reshuffle was due to Stalin's suspiciousness. What was there to make one think that the old Chekist Berzin could not just as well have satisfied the new demands of his associate? Would he have hesitated?)

At that point, they abolished the remaining days off for the 58's and lengthened the summer workday to fourteen hours, came to consider 50 and 60 degrees below zero Fahrenheit suitable for work; and allowed work to be canceled only on those days when the temperature was lower than 65 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. (And because of the caprices of individual chiefs some took the prisoners out for work even at 75 below.) At the Gorny Goldfields (plagiarizing Solovki once more) those who refused to go out to work were tied to the sledges and hauled thus to the mine face. It was also accepted in the Kolyma that the convoy was not only present to guard the prisoners but was also answerable for their fulfillment of the plan, and therefore had to avoid dozing and continue slave-driving them eternally.

And then, too, the scurvy finished off many, without any help from the administration.

But all that was too little, insufficiently strict, and the number of prisoners wasn't being sufficiently reduced. And so the "Garanin shootings" began, which were outright murders. Sometimes to the roar of tractors, sometimes without. Many camp points were known for executions and mass graves: Orotukan, and Polyarny

Spring, and Svistoplyas, and Annushka, and even the agricultural camp Dukcha, but the most famous of all on this account were the Zolotisty Goldfields (Chief of Camp Petrov, Security Operations Officers Zelenkov and Anisimov, Chief of the Goldfields Barkalov, Chief of the District Branch of the NKVD Burov) and the Serpantinka. At Zolotisty they used to summon a brigade from the mine face in broad daylight and shoot the members down one after another. (And this was not a substitute for night executions; they took place too.) When the chief of Yuglag, Nikolai Andreyevich Aglanov, arrived, he liked at line-up to pick out some brigade or other which had been at fault for something or other and order it to be taken aside. And then he used to empty his pistol into the frightened, crowded mass of people, accompanying his shots with happy shouts. The corpses were left unburied. In May they used to decompose—and at that point the "goners" who had survived until then were summoned to cover them up, in return for a beefed-up ration, even including spirits. At the Serpantinka they used to shoot from thirty to fifty men every day under an overhanging roof near the isolator. Then they dragged the corpses off behind a hillock on tractor sledges. The tractor drivers, the stevedores, and the gravediggers lived in a separate barracks. After Garanin himself had been shot they shot all of them too. And another technique was used there: They led them up to a deep shaft blindfolded and shot them in the ear or the back of the head. (No one mentions any resistance whatsoever.) They shut down the Serpantinka and leveled both the isolator there and everything connected with the shootings, and filled in those shafts as well.[4] At those same goldfields where no executions were conducted, notices were read aloud or posted with the names in big letters and the alleged causes in small letters: "for counterrevolutionary propaganda," "for insulting the convoy," "for failure to fulfill the norm."

The executions were stopped temporarily because the plan for getting out the gold was not being fulfilled and because they could not send new groups of prisoners across the frozen Okhotsk Sea. (M. I. Kononenko waited more than half a year to be shot at the Serpantinka and survived.)

In addition, the regime hardened in respect to tacking on new

4. In 1954 they discovered commercial gold ores at the Serpantinka about which they had not known earlier. And they had to mine among human bones; the gold was more precious.

terms. Gavrik at Mylga used to organize this in a picturesque way: they used to ride ahead on horseback with torches (in the Arctic night), and behind them they pulled with ropes to the district NKVD (eighteen miles) those who faced new charges. At other camps it was all very routine: the Classification and Records Sections merely selected from the card file those whose unreasonably short terms were coming to an end, summoned them in groups of eighty to a hundred people, and prescribed for each a new *tenner*. (R. V. Rets.)

Actually, I almost left Kolyma out of this book. Kolyma was a whole separate continent of the Archipelago, and it deserves its own separate histories. Yes, and Kolyma was "fortunate": Varlam Shalamov survived there and has already written a lot: Yevgeniya Ginzburg survived there, and O. Sliozberg, N. Surovtseva, N. Grankina, and others—and all of them have written memoirs.[5] I only permit myself to cite here several lines of V. Shalamov on the Garanin executions:

> For many months there day and night, at the morning and the evening checks, innumerable execution orders were read out. In a temperature of fifty below zero the musicians from among the non-political offenders played a flourish before and after each order was read. The smoking gasoline torches ripped apart the darkness. . . . The thin sheet on which the order was written was covered with hoarfrost, and some chief or other who was reading the order would brush the snowflakes from it with his sleeve so as to decipher and shout out the name of the next man on the list of those shot.

And so it was that the Archipelago completed the Second Five-Year Plan and, it would seem, entered socialism.

■

The beginning of the war shook the Archipelago chieftains: the course of the war at the very start was such that it might very likely have led to the breakdown of the entire Archipelago, and perhaps even to the employers having to answer to the workers.

5. How is it that there is such a concentration of Kolyma memoirs while the non-Kolyma memoirs are almost nonexistent? Was this because they really hauled off the cream of the crop to Kolyma? Or was it, no matter how strange this may seem, that in the "nearby" camps they died off more rapidly?

As far as one can judge from the impressions of the zeks from various camps, the course of events gave rise to two different kinds of conduct among the bosses. Some of them, those who were either more reasonable or perhaps more cowardly, relaxed their regime and began to talk with the prisoners almost gently, particularly during the weeks of military defeats. They were unable, of course, to improve the food or the maintenance. Others who were more stubborn and more vicious began, on the contrary, to be even stricter and more threatening with the 58's, as if to promise them death before liberation. In the majority of the camps they did not even announce the beginning of the war to the prisoners. Our implacable passion for lies and secrecy! And only on Monday did the zeks learn of it from those unescorted by convoy and from free personnel. Wherever radio existed (such as at Ust-Vym and many places in the Kolyma) it was silenced for the whole period of our military failures. In that very same Ust-Vym Camp they suddenly forbade the prisoners to *write* letters home (they could still receive them), and their kinfolk thereupon decided they had all been shot. And in some camps (sensing intuitively the direction of future policy) they began to isolate the 58's from the nonpolitical offenders in compounds guarded with particular strictness, put machine guns up on the watchtowers, and even spoke thus to the zeks who had formed up: "You are hostages! [Oh, how effervescent is this charge of carbonation, right from the Civil War! How hard it is to forget those words, and how easily they are remembered!] If Stalingrad falls, we are going to shoot the lot of you!" And that was the atmosphere in which the Archipelago natives asked about war communiqués: Is Stalingrad still holding out or has it already fallen? And in the Kolyma they hauled the Germans, Poles, and particularly notable prisoners from the 58's to such special compounds. But they immediately began to free the Poles in August, 1941.[6]

From the first days of the war, everywhere in the Archipelago (on opening the packages of mobilization instructions) they halted all releases of 58's. There were even cases of released prisoners being sent back to camp while on their way home. In

6. One hundred and eighty-six Poles were released from Zolotisty out of 2,100 brought there a year before. They went into Sikorski's army in the West. And there, evidently, they told all about Zolotisty. And in June, 1942, it was completely shut down.

Ukhta on June 23 a group released was already outside the perimeter waiting for a train when the convoy chased them back and even cursed them: "It's because of you the war began!" Karpunich received his release papers on the morning of June 23 but had not yet succeeded in getting through the gatehouse when they coaxed them out of him by fraud: "Show them to us!" He *showed* them and was kept in camp for another five years. This was considered to mean "until *special* orders." (When the war had already come to an end, in many camps they were forbidden even to go to the Classification and Records Section and ask when they would be freed. The point was that after the war there were not enough people for a while, and many local administrations, even if Moscow allowed them to release prisoners, issued their own "special orders" so as to hold on to manpower. And that was how Y. M. Orlova was held in Karlag—and why she did not manage to get home in time to see her dying mother.

From the very beginning of the war (in accordance, no doubt, with those same mobilization instructions) food norms were lowered in all camps. And the foodstuffs all got worse from year to year: vegetables were replaced by fodder turnips, grits by vetch and bran. (The Kolyma was supplied from America, and in some places there, in contrast, even white bread put in an appearance.) But as a result of the prisoners' growing weaker the fall-off in output in vital lines of production became so bad—from 80 to 90 percent—that they found it useful to return to prewar norms. Many camp production centers got orders for munitions, and the enterprising directors of such minifactories sometimes managed to feed the zeks with supplementary food from auxiliary gardens. Wherever they paid wages, these amounted in cash to thirty rubles monthly—and, in terms of wartime prices on the open market, to less than one kilogram of potatoes a month.

If one were to ask a wartime camp inmate his highest, supreme, and totally unattainable ambition, he would reply: "To eat just once a belly full of black bread—and then I could die." During the war they buried no fewer dead in the camps than at the front, except that they have not been eulogized by the poets. L. A. Komogor, in a team of "enfeebled prisoners," was engaged in the following light work for the entire winter of 1941–1942: packing coffin crates made of four boards, two naked corpses to

each, head by feet, at the rate of thirty boxes a day. (Evidently the camp was close to the capital, which was why the corpses had to be packed into crates.)

The first months of the war passed and the country adapted to the wartime rhythm of life. Those who had to went off to the front, and those who had to went off to the rear, and those who had to engaged in leadership and wiped their brows after drinking. And so it was in the camps too. It turned out that all the scare had been for nothing, that everything was standing firm, that just as this particular spring had been wound up in 1937, so it would keep on working without stopping. Those jailers who at first had tried to curry favor among the zeks now became fierce and knew no moderation or letup. It turned out that the forms, the system, of camp life had been determined correctly once and for all and would continue so for all eternity.

Seven camp epochs will lay their cases before you, arguing as to which was worst for the human being. But pay attention to that of wartime. Zeks put it this way: Whoever didn't serve time in wartime didn't know what camp was really like.

Throughout the winter of 1941–1942 at Vyatlag only in the barracks of the Engineering and Technical Personnel and in the repair shops was any warmth of life flickering at all. And all the rest was frozen cemeteries (and Vyatlag was actually engaged in cutting firewood for the Perm Railroad).

Here's what the wartime camp was: more work and less food and less heat and worse clothes and ferocious discipline and more severe punishment—and that still wasn't all. The zeks had always been deprived of external, audible protest, but the war even did away with the protest inside the soul. Any scoundrel with shoulder boards who was hiding from the front could shake his finger and preach: "And how are people dying at the front? And how are they working in freedom? And how many have died in Leningrad?" And as a result the zeks had no protest left even inside themselves. Yes, people were dying at the front, some of them lying in the snow too. Yes, they were squeezing the life out of people in freedom, and the people were famished and starving. (Yes, and the free *Labor Front*, into which unmarried girls from the villages were mobilized and in which they worked at logging, had only twenty-four and a half ounces of bread and soup, which

was dishwater and was as bad as any camp.) Yes, and in the Leningrad blockade they allotted even less than the camp punishment-cell ration. During the war the whole cancerous tumor of the Archipelago turned out to be (or in any case represented itself to be) an allegedly important and necessary organ of the Russian body. It, too, was allegedly working for the war! On it, too, victory depended! And all this shed a false and justifying light on the strands of barbed wire, on the citizen chief who was shaking his finger—and there you were dying as one of the tumor's rotting cells, and you were deprived even of the dying man's satisfaction of cursing it.

For the 58's the wartime camps were particularly unbearable because of their pasting on *second terms*, which hung over the prisoners' heads worse than any ax. The Security officers, busily engaged in saving themselves from the front, discovered in well-set-up backwaters and backwoods, in logging expeditions, plots involving the participation of the world bourgeoisie, plans for armed revolts and mass escapes. Such aces of Gulag as Y. M. Moroz, the chief of UkhtPechlag, particularly encouraged investigatory and interrogatory activity in his camps. In UkhtPechlag sentences poured as if from a sack—execution, twenty years —"for incitement to escape," "for sabotage." And how many there were for whom no trials at all were required, whose fates were determined by the movements of the stars: Sikorski displeased Stalin, and in one night they seized thirty Polish women at Elgen and took them off and shot them.

There were many zeks—and this is something which was not fabricated, it is quite true—who applied from the first days of the war to be sent to the front. They had tasted the most foully stinking camp dregs—and now they asked to be sent to the front in order to defend this camp system and to die for it in a penalty company! ("And if I come out of it alive, I will return to serve out the rest of my term!") The orthodox Communists now assure us that *they* were the ones who begged to be sent to the front. And some of them did (including those Trotskyites who had survived the executions), but not very many. For the most part they had got themselves set up in certain quiet spots in camp (not without the help of the Communist chiefs either), where they could spend their time in contemplation, discussion, recollection, and waiting, and, after all, in a penalty company you'd last no

more than three days. This desire to enlist was an impulse not of ideological principle but of heart. That is what the Russian character was: It is better to die in an open field than in a rotten shed! To unwind, to become, even for just a short while, "like everyone else," an unrepressed citizen. To get away from the stagnant feeling of doom here, from the pasting on of new terms, from silent annihilation. And some of them took an even simpler view of it all, but one which was not in the least shameful: Out there you would still die eventually, but for the moment they would give you a uniform to wear, feed you up, give you something to drink, transport you, and you could look out of the window of the railroad car and you could flirt with the girls at the stations. And then, too, there was an attitude of good-natured forgiveness: You've wronged us, and here's how we answer you!

However, for the state there was no economic nor organizational sense in carrying out all this superfluous shifting about of some people from camp to the front, and some people to camp in their place. Everyone had had his own circle of life and death determined for him: Once you've been classified among the goats, then you have to die as a goat. Sometimes they did take nonpolitical offenders with short terms for the front, and not in penalty companies, of course, just in the ordinary active army. It didn't happen at all often, but there were cases in which they took 58's as well. Vladimir Sergeyevich Gorshunov was taken from camp to the front in 1943, and at the end of the war he was returned to camp with an extended sentence. They were all marked men. And it was simple for the security chief in their unit *to paste* a new term on them, much simpler than on newcomers.

But the camp authorities did not entirely disregard this wave of patriotism. At the logging operations it had little impact. But slogans like "Let's give coal above plan—it's light for Leningrad!" or "Let us support the guard units with mortar ammunition!" caught on well, as eyewitnesses report. Arseny Farmakov, a venerable person with a well-adjusted personality, tells how their camp was *caught up* in work for the front; he intended to describe it. The zeks were unhappy when they were refused permission to collect money for a tank column ("the Dzhidinets").[7]

7. This phenomenon requires elucidation on many different planes, as in fact does the entire Soviet-German War. The decades go by. We do not manage to sort things out and understand ourselves even on one plane before the

And as to rewards for this—as is universally known, soon after the end of the war an amnesty was proclaimed for deserters, swindlers, and thieves. And Special Camps for the 58's.

And the closer the war came to its end, the more and more cruel did the regimen for the 58's become. Nor did one have to go far away from Moscow, to the Dzhida or the Kolyma camps, to find this out. Right outside Moscow itself, almost within the boundaries of the city, in Khovrino, there was a shabby little factory to supply the internal needs of the NKVD itself, and attached to it a strict-regimen camp run by Mamulov, who was all-powerful because his own brother was the chief of Beria's secretariat. This Mamulov would pick out anyone he wanted from the Krasnaya Presnya Transit Prison, and he set up whatever regimen he pleased in his camplet. For example, he allowed visits with relatives (which were widely permitted almost everywhere in camps near Moscow) to be conducted only through two screens, as in prison. And he had the same kind of prison system in his barracks: many bright lights left on at night; constant observation of those who were sleeping to make sure that on cold nights they would not cover themselves with their padded jackets. (If they did, they were wakened.) In the punishment cells he had a clean cement floor and nothing else at all—just as in a regular efficient prison. But no punishment he had designated gave him any satisfaction unless along with it and before it he bloodied the nose of the culprit. In addition, late-night inspections by the (male) jailers of the women's barracks holding up to 450 prisoners were a regular practice in his camp. They rushed in with wild whoops and the command: "Stand next to your cots!" The half-dressed women jumped up, and the jailers searched both their persons and their beds with the minute thoroughness required to find a needle or a love note. If anything was discovered, the prisoner was sentenced to the punishment cell. Shklinik, chief of the Chief Mechanic's Section, went about the different factory sections on the night shift like a stooping gorilla; and no sooner had he noticed that someone had begun to doze, to nod his head, or shut his eyes, than with all his might he would hurl at him an iron block, a pair of pliers, a chunk of steel.

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next one is deposited in a new layer of ash. There have not been freedom and purity of information in any decade—and from one blow to the next people have not been able to comprehend either themselves or others or events.

Such was the regimen the camp inmates of Khovrino earned with their work for the front: they produced mortar shells throughout the war. The little factory was adapted for this output by a prisoner engineer (alas, his name has not been remembered, but it won't get lost for good, of course). He created a design bureau also. He was serving time as a 58 and belonged to that category of human beings most repulsive to Mamulov because they refused to give up their own opinions and convictions. And yet for a time Mamulov had to tolerate this good-for-nothing! But no one is irreplaceable in our country! And when production was already sufficiently under way, one day in broad daylight, in the presence of the office personnel (intentionally in their presence—let everyone know, let them tell everyone! and we are telling it too, you see!), Mamulov and two of his assistants rushed in, grabbed the engineer by his beard, threw him to the floor, kicked him with their jackboots till the blood flowed, and then sent him off to the Butyrki to get a second term for his political declarations.

And this lovely little camplet was just fifteen minutes by electric train from the Leningrad Station. Not far, just sad!

(The newcomer zeks who got into the camps near Moscow tried to hold on to them tightly if they had relatives in Moscow, yes, and even without that: it seemed, all the same, that you were not being torn away into that far-distant abyss from which there was no return, that here despite everything you were on the edge of civilization. But this was self-deceit. They usually fed the prisoners there worse, calculating that the majority were receiving parcels, and they didn't even issue bedding. But the worst thing was the eternally nauseating *latrine rumors* which kept hovering over these camps about prisoner transports to far away: life was as chancy as on the point of a needle, and it was impossible to be certain even for a day that you would be able to live it out in one and the same place.)

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Such are the forms into which the islands of the Archipelago hardened, but one need not think that as it hardened it ceased to exude more metastases from itself.

In 1939, before the Finnish War, Gulag's alma mater, Solovki,

which had come too close to the West, was moved via the Northern Sea Route to the mouth of the Yenisei River and there merged into the already created Norillag, which soon reached 75,000 in size. So malignant was Solovki that even in dying it threw off one last metastasis—and what a metastasis!

The Archipelago's conquest of the unpeopled deserts of Kazakhstan belongs to the prewar years. That was where the nest of Karaganda camps swelled like an octopus; and fertile metastases were propagated in Dzhezkazgan with its poisoned cuprous water, in Mointy and in Balkhash. And camps spread out over the north of Kazakhstan also.

New growths swelled in Novosibirsk Province (the Mariinsk Camps), in the Krasnoyarsk region (the Kansk Camps and Kraslag), in Khakassiya, in Buryat-Mongolia, in Uzbekistan, even in Gornaya Shoriya.

Nor did the Russian North, so beloved by the Archipelago, end its own growth (UstVymlag, Nyroblag, Usollag), nor the Urals (Ivdellag).

There are many omissions in this list. It was enough to write "Usollag" to remember that there was also a camp in Usolye in Irkutsk Province.

Yes, there was simply no province, be it Chelyabinsk or Kuibyshev, which did not give birth to its own camps.

A new method of creating camps was adopted after the exile of the Germans from the Volga: whole dispossessed villages were enclosed, just as they were, in a camp *compound*, and these were the Agricultural Camp Sectors (the Kamensky Agricultural Camps between Kamyshin and Engels).

We ask the reader's pardon for the many gaps and flaws in this chapter; we have cast only a frail bridge across the whole epoch of the Archipelago—simply because we did not have any more material available. We could not broadcast pleas for more on the radio.

Here once again the crimson star of Naftaly Frenkel describes an intricate loop in the heavens of the Archipelago.

The year 1937, which struck down its very own, did not spare his head either: chief of BAMlag, an NKVD general, he was once again, out of gratitude, imprisoned in the Lubyanka, with which he was already familiar. But Frenkel, nonetheless, did not weary

of thirsting for the one true service, nor did the Wise Teacher weary of seeking out this service. The shameful and unsuccessful war with Finland began and Stalin saw that he was unprepared, that there were no supply lines to his army thrust out into the Karelian snows—and he remembered the inventive Frenkel and called him in: it was necessary right then, in the fierce winter, without any preparation whatsoever, without any existing plans even, or warehouses, or automobile roads, to build three railroads in Karelia—one "rocade" paralleling the border, and two more leading up to it—and to build them *in the course of three months*, because it was simply a disgrace for such a great power to mess about with that little pug dog Finland for such a long time. This was straight out of a fairy tale: the evil king ordered the evil sorcerer to do something totally impossible and unimaginable. And so the leader of socialism asked: "Can you?" And the joyous merchant and black-market currency speculator answered: "Yes!"

But this time he set his conditions:

1. That he be taken out of Gulag entirely and that a new zek empire be founded, a new autonomous archipelago called GULZhDS (pronounced "Gulzhedess")—the Chief Administration of Camps for Railroad Construction—and that as head of this archipelago there be named . . . Frenkel.

2. That all the national resources he selected would be put at his disposal (this was not going to be another Belomor).

3. That during the period of extreme emergency operation GULZhDS would also be removed from the socialist system with its exasperating accounting procedures. Frenkel would not be required to render accounts about anything. He did not set up tents and did not establish any camps. He had no rations, no system of differentiated dining facilities, and no system of differentiated food "pots"! (And it was he who had proposed the system of different levels of rations in the first place! Only a genius can repeal the laws of a genius!) He piled up in the snow heaps of the best food, together with sheepskin coats and felt boots, and every zek could put on whatever he pleased and eat as much as he wanted. Only the makhorka and the vodka were controlled by his assistants, and they were the only things which had to be "earned."

The Great Strategist was willing. And GULZhDS was created! Was the Archipelago split in two? No, the Archipelago only

grew stronger, multiplied, and would proceed to take over the whole country even more swiftly.

Frenkel, however, did not succeed in completing his Karelian railroads; Stalin hurried to end the war in a draw. But GULZhDS hardened and grew. It received more and more new orders to carry out (but now with normal accounting procedures). There was the "rocade" railroad paralleling the Iranian border, then the "rocade" railroad paralleling the Volga from Syzran near Kuibyshev on down to Stalingrad, and then the "Railroad of Death" from Salekhard to Igarka, and then BAM proper—the Baikal-Amur Main Line, from Taishet to Bratsk and farther.

Further, Frenkel's idea enriched the development of Gulag itself; it came to be considered necessary to organize Gulag itself in terms of branch administrations. Just as the Sovnarkom—the Council of People's Commissars—consisted of Narkomats—People's Commissariats—so Gulag created its own ministries for its own empire: GlavLeslag—the Chief Administration of Logging Camps; GlavPromstroi—the Chief Administration of Camps for Industrial Construction; GULGMP—the Chief Administration of Camps for the Mining and Metallurgical Industry.

Then came the war. And all these Gulag ministries were evacuated to various cities. Gulag itself landed in Ufa; GULZhDS in Vyatka. The communications between provincial cities were by no means so reliable as the radial communications out of Moscow, and for the whole first half of the war it was as if Gulag had disintegrated: it no longer ran the whole Archipelago, and each surrounding area of the Archipelago was subordinate to the administration evacuated to it. Thus it was that it fell on Frenkel to run the entire Russian Northeast from Kirov (because other than the Archipelago there was almost nothing else there). But those who envisioned in this the fall of the Roman Empire were mistaken, for it would gather itself together again after the war in even greater majesty.

Frenkel remembered an old friendship; he summoned and named to an important position in GULZhDS a man named Bukhaltsev, who had been the editor of his yellow sheet, *The Kopeck*, in prerevolutionary Mariupol and whose colleagues had either been shot or scattered across the face of the earth.

Frenkel's talents were outstanding not only in commerce and organization. Taking in rows of figures at a glance, he could add

them up in his head. He loved to brag that he could recognize forty thousand prisoners by face and that he knew the family name, given name and patronymic of each, their code article and their term (and it was required procedure in his camps to announce all this information at the approach of high-ranking chiefs). He always managed without a chief engineer. Looking at a plan for a railroad station that had been brought him, he was quick to note a mistake in it, and then he would crumple up the plan, throw it in his subordinate's face, and say: "It's time you understand that you are not a designer, just a jackass!" He had a nasal twang and his voice was ordinarily calm. He was short. He used to wear the high karakul hat—the papakha—of a railroad general, dark blue on top, with a red lining. And he always, through the varied years, wore a field jacket of military cut—a garment which simultaneously constituted a claim to being a leader of the state and a declaration of not belonging to the intelligentsia. Like Trotsky he always lived aboard trains, traveling around his scattered construction battlefields. And those summoned from the discomfort in which natives of the Archipelago lived to confer with him in his railroad car were astonished at his bentwood chairs, his upholstered furniture, and were all the more timid in confronting the reproaches and orders of their chief. He himself never entered a single barracks, never smelled all that stench—he asked and demanded only work. He particularly loved to telephone construction projects at night, helping to perpetuate the legend about himself that he never slept. (And in fact during Stalin's era many other big shots were accustomed to do the same.) He never married.

He was never again arrested. He became Kaganovich's deputy for railroad construction and died in Moscow in the fifties with the rank of lieutenant general, in old age, in honor, and in peace.

I have the feeling that he really hated this country!

Chapter 5

■

What the Archipelago Stands On

There used to be a city in the Far East with the loyal name of *Tsesarevich*—"Crown Prince." The Revolution saw it renamed *Svobodny*, meaning "Free." The Amur Cossacks who once inhabited the city were scattered—and the city was empty. They had to resettle it with someone. And they did: with prisoners and the Chekists guarding them. The whole city of Svobodny became a camp (BAMlag).

And so it is that symbols are spontaneously born of life.

The camps are not merely the "dark side" of our postrevolutionary life Their scale made them not an aspect, not just a side, but very nearly the very liver of events. It was rare for our half-century so to manifest itself so consistently, with such finality.

Just as every point is formed by the intersection of at least two lines, every event is formed by the intersection of at least two necessities—and so although on one hand our economic requirements led us to the system of camps, this by itself might have led us to labor armies, but it intersected with the theoretical justification for the camps, fortunately already formulated.

And so they met and grew together: like a thorn into a nest, or a protuberance into a hollow. And that is how the Archipelago was born.

The economic need manifested itself, as always, openly and greedily; for the state which had decided to strengthen itself in a very short period of time (and here three-quarters of the matter

was in the *period* allotted, just as with Belomor!) and which did not require anything from outside, the need was manpower:

a. Cheap in the extreme, and better still—for free.
b. Undemanding, capable of being shifted about from place to place any day of the week, free of family ties, not requiring either established housing, or schools, or hospitals, or even, for a certain length of time, kitchens and baths.

It was possible to obtain such manpower only by swallowing up one's own sons.

The theoretical justification could not have been formulated with such conviction in the haste of those years had it not had its beginnings in the past century. Engels discovered that the human being had arisen not through the perception of a moral idea and not through the process of thought, but out of happenstance and meaningless work (an ape picked up a stone—and with this everything began). Marx, concerning himself with a less remote time ("Critique of the Gotha Program"), declared with equal conviction that the *one and only* means of correcting offenders (true, he referred here to criminals; he never even conceived that his pupils might consider politicals offenders) was not solitary contemplation, not moral soul-searching, not repentance, and not languishing (for all that was superstructure!)—but productive labor. He himself had never in his life taken a pick in hand. To the end of his days he never pushed a wheelbarrow, mined coal, felled timber, and we don't even know how his firewood was split—but he wrote that down on paper, and the paper did not resist.

And for his followers everything now fell into place: To compel a prisoner to labor every day (sometimes fourteen hours at a time, as at the Kolyma mine faces) was humane and would lead to his correction. On the contrary, to limit his confinement to a prison cell, courtyard, and vegetable garden, to give him the chance to read books, write, think, and argue during these years meant to treat him "like cattle." (This is from that same "Critique of the Gotha Program.")

True, in the heated times immediately following the October Revolution they paid little heed to these subtleties, and it seemed even more humane simply to shoot them. And those whom they did not shoot but imprisoned in the earliest camps were im-

prisoned there not for purposes of correction, but to render them harmless, purely for quarantine.

The point is that even then some minds were occupied with penal theory, for example, Pyotr Stuchka, and in the *Guiding Principles of the Criminal Law of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic* of 1919, the very concept of *punishment* was subjected to a new definition. Punishment, it was there very refreshingly affirmed, is *neither revenge* (the workers' and peasants' state was not taking vengeance on an offender) nor *expiation of guilt* (there is no such thing as individual *guilt*, merely class causation), but a defensive measure to protect the social structure—*a measure of social defense.*

Once it is accepted as a "measure of social defense," then it follows that war is war, and you either have to shoot ("the supreme measure of social defense") or else imprison. But in this the idea of *correction* had somehow gotten muddied—though in that very same 1919 the Eighth Congress of the Party had called for "correction." And, foremost, it had become incomprehensible: *What should one be corrected for if there had been no guilt?* It was hardly possible to be corrected for class causation!?

By then the Civil War had come to an end. In 1922 the first Soviet Codes were established. In 1923 the "congress of the penitentiary labor workers" took place. The new "basic principles of criminal legislation" were composed in 1924—the foundations of the new Criminal Code of 1926 (which hung around our necks for thirty-five years). And through all this the newly found concepts that there is no "guilt" and no "punishment," but that there is "social danger" and "social defense," remained intact.

Of course, this was more convenient. Such a theory made it possible to arrest anyone as a hostage, as a "doubtful person" (Lenin's telegram to Yevgeniya Bosh), even to exile entire peoples because they were dangerous (and the examples are well known), but, given all this, one had to be a first-class juggler in order still to construct and maintain in purified form the theory of *correction.*

However, there were jugglers, and the theory was there, and the camps were indeed called corrective. And we can bring many quotations to bear even now.

Vyshinsky: "All Soviet penal policy is based on a dialectical [!] combination of the principle of repression and compulsion with

the principle of persuasion and re-education."[1] "All bourgeois penitentiary institutions try to 'harass' the criminal by subjecting him to physical and moral suffering." (They wish to "reform" him.) "In distinction from bourgeois punishment the sufferings of the prisoners in our country are not an end but a means. [Just as there, too, it would seem not an end but a means.—A.S.] The end in our country . . . is genuine reform, genuine correction, so conscientious laborers should emerge from the camps."

Now have you got it? Even though we use compulsion, we are nonetheless *correcting* (and also, as it turns out, via suffering!) —except it is not known exactly from *what.*

But right then and there, on a nearby page, we find:

"With the assistance of revolutionary violence the corrective-labor camps localize and render harmless the criminal elements of the old society."[2] (We are still talking about the old society! And even in 1952 we will still keep talking about the "old society." "Pile everything on the wolf's neck"—blame it all on the old society!)

So not a single word about correction? We are localizing and rendering harmless?

And then in that same 1934:

"The two-in-one task is suppression plus re-education of anyone who can be re-educated."

Of anyone who can be re-educated. It becomes clear that correction is not for everyone.

And now a ready-made phrase from somewhere already flits about among the small-time authors: "the correction of the corrigibles," "the correction of the corrigibles."

And what about the incorrigibles? Into a common grave? *To the Moon* (Kolyma)? *Below Shmidtikha** (Norilsk)?

Even the Corrective Labor Code of 1924 was criticized by Vyshinsky's jurists, from the heights of 1934, for "a false concept of universal correction." Because this code says nothing about *destruction.*

No one promised that they would *correct* the 58's.

And therefore I have called this Part "The *Destructive*-Labor Camps." That's how we felt them on our pelts.

1. A. Y. Vyshinsky, from his preface to I. L. Averbakh, *op. cit.*, p. vi.
2. *Ibid.*, p. vii.

And if some of the jurists' quotations fit together crookedly, so be it, just go raise up Stuchka from the grave, or drag out Vyshinsky, and let them make head or tail of it. I am not to blame.

It is only now, on sitting down to write my own book, that I decided to leaf through my predecessors' works; yes, good people had to help even here, because you'd not now be able to find their works anywhere. And as we dragged our soiled camp pea jackets about, we never even guessed at the existence of such books. That all our life there in camp was determined not by the will of the citizen chief but by some kind of legendary labor code for prisoners—that was not just an obscure *latrine rumor* for us alone; even the chief of the camp, a major, wouldn't have believed it for anything. Published in an edition "for official use only," never held in anyone's hands, and no one knew whether they were still kept in the Gulag safes or whether they had all been burned as wrecking activity. Neither were quotations from them hung up in the cultural and educational corners, nor were their miserable figures proclaimed from the wooden rostrums: How many hours long was the workday? How many rest days in a month? Is there payment for labor? Was there any provision for mutilation? Yes, and you would get a big horse laugh from your fellow zeks too if you even asked such questions.

Our diplomats were the ones who had seen and read these humane words. They had, it would seem, held up and brandished this booklet at international conferences. Indeed! I myself have only now obtained the quotations—and even now my tears flow:

- In the *Guiding Principles* of 1919: Given the fact that punishment is not vengeance, then it may include no elements of torture.
- In 1920: The use of the condescending familiar form of address is forbidden in speaking to the prisoners. (And, forgive my language, but what about "——— in the mouth"—is that permissible?)
- The Corrective Labor Code of 1924, Article 49: "The prison regime must be deprived of all elements of torture; handcuffs, punishment cells [!], strict solitary confinement, deprivation of food, visits through a grating only are under no circumstances permitted."

Well, that's enough. And there are no later instructions. That's enough even for the diplomats. And not even that is needed by Gulag.

And in the Criminal Code of 1926 there was an Article 9. I learned about it by chance and learned it by heart:

"Measures of social defense may not have as their purpose the infliction of physical suffering or the humiliation of human dignity and do not aim at exacting revenge and retribution."

Now that is clarity for you! Because I enjoyed catching our bosses out on *legal* grounds, I often rattled off this section to them. And all these protectors of ours only popped their eyes in astonishment and indignation. There were old veterans who had served for twenty years, who were nearing their pensions, who had never yet heard of any Article 9, and for that matter had never held the Code in their hands.

Oh, "what an intelligent, farsighted humane administration from top to bottom," as Supreme Court Judge Leibowitz of New York State wrote in *Life* magazine, after having visited Gulag. "In serving out his term of punishment the prisoner retains a feeling of dignity." That is what he comprehended and saw.

Oh, fortunate New York State, to have such a perspicacious jackass for a judge!

And oh, you well-fed, devil-may-care, nearsighted, irresponsible foreigners with your notebooks and your ball-point pens—beginning with those correspondents who back in Kem asked the zeks questions in the presence of the camp chiefs—how much you have harmed us in your vain passion to shine with understanding in areas where you did not grasp a lousy thing!

Human dignity! Of persons condemned without trial? Who are made to sit down beside Stolypin cars at stations with their rear ends in the mud? Who, at the whistle of the citizen jailer's lash, scrape up with their hands the urine-soaked earth and carry it away, so as not to be sentenced to the punishment block? Of those educated women who, as a great honor, have been found worthy of laundering the linen of the citizen chief of the camp and of feeding his privately owned pigs? And who, at his first drunken gesture, have to make themselves available, so as not to perish *on general work* the next day?

Fire, fire! The branches crackle and the night wind of late autumn blows the flame of the bonfire back and forth. The compound is dark; I am alone at the bonfire, and I can bring it still more carpenters' shavings. The compound here is a privileged one, so privileged that it is almost as if I were out in freedom —this is an Island of Paradise; this is the Marfino "sharashka"

—a scientific institute staffed with prisoners—in its most privileged period. No one is overseeing me, calling me to a cell, chasing me away from the bonfire. I am wrapped in a padded jacket, and even then it is chilly in the penetrating wind.

But *she*—who has already been standing in the wind for hours, her arms straight down, her head drooping, weeping, then growing numb and still. And then again she begs piteously: "Citizen Chief! Forgive me! Please forgive me! I won't do it again."

The wind carries her moan to me, just as if she were moaning next to my ear. The citizen chief at the gatehouse fires up his stove and does not answer.

This was the gatehouse of the camp next door to us, from which workers came into our compound to lay water pipes and to repair the old ramshackle seminary building. Across from me, beyond the artfully intertwined, many-stranded barbed-wire barricade and two steps away from the gatehouse, beneath a bright lantern, stood the punished girl, head hanging, the wind tugging at her gray work skirt, her feet growing numb from the cold, a thin scarf over her head. It had been warm during the day, when they had been digging a ditch on our territory. And another girl, slipping down into a ravine, had crawled her way to the Vladykino Highway and escaped. The guard had bungled. And Moscow city buses ran right along the highway. When they caught on, it was too late to catch her. They raised the alarm. A mean, dark major arrived and shouted that if they failed to catch the fugitive girl, the entire camp would be deprived of visits and parcels for a whole month because of her escape. And the women brigadiers went into a rage, and they were all shouting, one of them in particular, who kept viciously rolling her eyes: "Oh, I hope they catch her, the bitch! I hope they take scissors and—clip, clip—take off all her hair in front of the line-up!" (This wasn't something she had thought up herself. This was the way they punished women in Gulag.) But the girl who was now standing outside the gatehouse in the cold had sighed and said instead: "At least she can have a good time out in freedom for all of us!" The jailer overheard what she said, and now she was being punished; everyone else had been taken off to the camp, but she had been set outside there to stand "at attention" in front of the gatehouse. This had been at 6 P.M. and it was now 11 P.M. She tried to shift from one foot to another, but the guard stuck out

his head and shouted: "Stand at attention, whore, or else it will be worse for you!" And now she was not moving, only weeping: "Forgive me, Citizen Chief! Let me into the camp, I won't do it any more!"

But even in the camp no one was about to say to her: *All right, idiot! Come on in!*

The reason they were keeping her out there so long was that the next day was Sunday and she would not be needed for work.

Such a straw-blond, naïve, uneducated slip of a girl! She had been imprisoned for some spool of thread. What a dangerous thought you expressed there, little sister! They want to teach you a lesson for the rest of your life.

Fire, fire! We fought the war—and we looked into the bonfires to see what kind of a Victory it would be. The wind wafted a glowing husk from the bonfire.

To that flame and to you, girl, I promise: the whole wide world will read about you.

This was happening at the end of 1947, a few days before the thirtieth anniversary of the October Revolution, in our capital city of Moscow, which had just celebrated eight hundred years of its cruelties. Little more than a mile away from the All-Union Agricultural Fair Grounds. And a half-mile away from the Ostankino Museum of Serf Arts and Handicrafts.

■

Serfs! This comparison occurred to many when they had the time to think about it, and not accidentally either. Not just individual features, but the whole central meaning of their existence was identical for serfdom and the Archipelago; they were forms of social organization for the forced and pitiless exploitation of the unpaid labor of millions of slaves. Six days a week, and often seven, the natives of the Archipelago went out to fatiguing "barshchina"*—forced labor—which did not bring them even the least little return. They were allowed neither a fifth day nor even a seventh in which to work for themselves, because their sustenance was a "mesyachina"—a monthly serf ration—a camp ration. They were divided just as precisely into the categories of those paying their dues in the form of forced labor—(Group "A") and the household serfs (Group "B"), who directly served

the estate owner (chief of the camp) and the estate (the compound). Only those totally unable to get down from their peasant stoves (board bunks) were recognized as infirm (Group "C"). And similarly, there were punishments for offenders (Group "D"), except for the difference that the estate owner, acting in his own interests, punished with a lash in the stable and the loss of fewer workdays, and he had no punishment block, whereas, in accordance with state instructions, the chief of the camp placed the culprit in the ShIzo—the Penalty Isolator—or the BUR—the Strict Regimen Barracks. Like the estate owner, the chief of camp could take any slave to be his lackey, cook, barber, or jester (and he could also assemble a serf theater if he wished); he could take any slave woman as a housekeeper, a concubine, or a servant. Like an estate owner, he could play tricks and show his temper as much as he liked. (The chief of the Khimki Camp, Major Volkov, noticed that a girl prisoner was drying her long flaxen locks in the sun after washing them, and for some reason this made him angry and he shouted: "Cut off her hair." And they immediately cut all her hair off. That was in 1945.) And whenever the camp chief or the estate owner changed, all the slaves obediently awaited the new master, made guesses about his habits, and surrendered in advance to his power. Being incapable of foreseeing what the will of the master would be, the serf took little thought for the morrow, nor did the prisoner. The serf could not marry without the master's permission, and it was even more the case that a prisoner could acquire a camp wife only with the indulgence of the camp chief. Just as a serf had not chosen his slave's fate, since he was not to blame for his birth, neither did the prisoner choose his; he also got into the Archipelago by pure fate.

This similarity has long since been discerned by the Russian language: "Have you fed the people?" "Have you sent the people out to work?" "How many people do you have there?" "Send me one person!" *People, people,* whom do they mean? That's the way they talked about serfs. And that is how they speak about prisoners.[3] One cannot speak like that about officers or leaders, however—"How many people do you have?" No one would understand you.

3. And that is also the way they talk about collective farmers and unskilled laborers, but we are not going to carry this any further.

But there are some who will object that nonetheless there are really not so many similarities between serfs and prisoners. There are more differences.

And we agree with that: there are more differences. But what is surprising is that all the differences are to the credit of serfdom! All the differences are to the discredit of the Gulag Archipelago!

The serfs did not work longer than from sunrise to sunset. The zeks started work in darkness and ended in darkness (and they didn't always end either). For the serfs Sundays were sacred; and the twelve sacred Orthodox holidays as well, and local saints' days, and a certain number of the twelve days of Christmas (they went about in mummers' costumes). The prisoner was fearful on the eve of every Sunday: he didn't know whether they would get it off. And he never got holidays at all (just as the Volga didn't get any days off, remember?); those firsts of May and those sevenths of November involved more miseries, with searches and special regimen, than the holidays were worth (and a certain number were put into punishment blocks every year precisely on those very days). For the serfs Christmas and Easter were genuine holidays; and as for a *body search* either after work or in the morning or at night ("Stand next to your cots!"), the serfs knew not of these! The serfs lived in permanent huts, regarding them as their own, and when at night they lay down on top of their stoves, or on their sleeping platform between ceiling and stove—their "polaty"—or else on a bench, they knew: This is my own place, I have slept here forever and ever, and I always will. The prisoner did not know what barracks he would be in on the morrow (and even when he returned from work he could not be certain that he would sleep in that place that night). He did not have his "own" sleeping shelf or his "own" multiple bunk. He went wherever they drove him.

The serf on "barshchina," or forced labor, had his own horse, his own wooden plow, ax, scythe, spindle, chests, dishes, and clothes. Even the household serfs, as Herzen writes,[4] always had some clothes of their own which they could leave to their nearest and dearest and which were almost never taken away by the

4. A. I. Herzen, *Pismo Staromy Tovarishchu* (*Letter to an Old Comrade*). Academy Edition of Collected Works, Vol. XX, p. 585.

estate owner. In spring the zek was forced to turn in his winter clothing and in the autumn to turn in his summer clothing. At inventories they emptied his bag and took away for the government every extra piece of clothing. He was not permitted to have even a small penknife, or a bowl, and as far as livestock was concerned, only lice. One way or another a serf would cast his line and catch a fish. The zek caught fish only with a spoon and only in his gruel. The serf had a little cow named Brownie or at least a goat and chickens. The zek's lips never touched milk, and he'd never see hen's eggs for whole decades, and probably he'd not recognize them if he did.

Old Russia, which experienced Asiatic slavery for seven whole centuries, did not for the most part know *famine*. "In Russia no one has ever died of starvation," said the proverb. And a proverb is not made up out of lies and nonsense. The serfs were slaves, but they had full bellies.[5] The Archipelago lived for decades in the grip of cruel famine. The zeks would scuffle over a herring tail from the garbage pail. For Christmas and Easter even the thinnest serf peasant broke his fast with fat bacon. But even the best worker in camp could get fat bacon only in parcels from home.

The serfs lived in families. The sale or exchange of a serf away from his family was a universally recognized and proclaimed barbarism. Popular Russian literature waxed indignant over this. Hundreds of serfs, perhaps thousands (but this is unlikely), were torn from their families. But not millions. The zek was separated from his family on the first day of his arrest and, in 50 percent of all cases—forever. If a son was arrested with his father (as we heard from Vitkovsky) or a wife together with her husband, the greatest care was taken to see that they did not meet at the same camp. And if by some chance they

5. There is testimony on this for all the Russian centuries. In the seventeenth, Yuri Krizhanich wrote that the peasants and artisans of Muscovy lived more bountifully than those of the West, that the poorest inhabitants in Russia ate good bread, fish, meat. Even in the Time of Troubles "the long-preserved granaries had not been exhausted, there were stacks standing in the fields, threshing floors were filled full with specially stacked sheaves and stooks and haystacks—for from four to ten years" (Avraami Palitsyn). In the eighteenth century, Fonvizin, comparing the standard of living of the Russian peasants with that of the peasants of Languedoc, Provence, wrote: "I find, objectively judging things, that the state of our peasants is incomparably happier." In the nineteenth century, Pushkin wrote of the serf village:

"The evidence of abundance and work is everywhere."

did meet, they were separated as quickly as possible. Similarly, every time a man and a woman zek came together in camp for fleeting or real love, they hastened to penalize them with the punishment cell, to separate them and send them away from one another. And even the most sentimental of our writing ladies—Marietta Shaginyan or Tatyana Tess—never let fall a single silent tear into their kerchiefs about that. (Well, of course, *they didn't know*. Or else thought *it was necessary*.)

And even the herding of serfs from one place to another didn't occur in a frenzy of haste; they were permitted to pack their goods and chattels, to gather up their movables, and to move calmly a score or so of miles away. But a prisoner transport would hit the zek like a sudden squall: twenty minutes or ten, just time enough to turn in camp property, and his entire life would be turned upside down, and he would go off somewhere to the ends of the earth, maybe forever. In the life of one serf there was hardly ever more than one move, and most often they stayed put. But a native of the Archipelago unfamiliar with prisoner transports couldn't have been found. And many zeks were moved five, seven, eleven times.

Some serfs managed to escape to the freer "obrok" system*—a fixed money payment to the serf-owner—and the "obrok" serfs might travel far out of sight of the cursed master, go into trade, enrich themselves, and live like free people. But even the zeks privileged enough to go about without convoy lived inside that same camp compound and had to drag themselves early in the morning to the very same type of work to which the column of the other zeks was driven.

The household serfs were for the most part degenerate parasites ("Servants are a boorish spawn," as the saying goes): they lived off the labor of the "barshchina" serfs; but at least they themselves did not rule over the "barshchina" serfs. It was doubly nauseating for the zek: that, in addition to everything else, the degenerate trusties directed them and ordered them around.

And in general, the entire situation of the serfs was alleviated by the fact that the estate owner had necessarily to be merciful to them: they were worth money; their work brought him wealth. The camp chief was merciless to the prisoners: he had not bought them, and he would not be willing them to his children, and if they died, others would be sent him.

No, we got ourselves involved to no purpose in comparing our zeks with the serfs of the estate owners. The situation of the latter, one has to admit, was very much less harried and more humane. A closer comparison of the situation of the natives of the Archipelago would be with the *factory* serfs of the Urals, the Altai, and Nerchinsk. Or the inhabitants of the Arakcheyev* semimilitary settlements. (Some people object, however, even to this: they, too, had it good—in the Arakcheyev settlements there were also nature, family, and holidays. Only the slavery of the ancient East is a fair comparison.)

And there is only one, just one, plus which comes to mind on the side of the zeks as opposed to the serfs: the prisoner might land in the Archipelago even as a juvenile of twelve to fifteen but not from the very day of his birth! He did at least snatch a number of years in freedom before imprisonment! As for the advantage of a definite *sentence* in comparison with the lifetime of peasant serfdom, there are many qualifications: namely, if the term was not a "quarter"—twenty-five years; if the article was not 58; if it wasn't "until special orders"; if they didn't paste a second term on the prisoner in camp; if at the end of his term the prisoner was not automatically sent off into exile; if the prisoner after being released was not sent straight back to the Archipelago as a *repeater*. There is such a fence of qualifications, in fact, that, after all, it is only fair to recall that sometimes the nobleman master too might manumit his serf out of whimsy.

That is why, when the "Emperor Mikhail" informed us at the Lubyanka about the anecdotal deciphering of the initials of the Soviet Bolshevik Party (VKP-b) current among Moscow workers at that time as "Vtoroye Krepostnoye Pravo (Bolsheviks)"—"Second Serfdom (Bolsheviks)"—this did not seem to us so much funny as prophetic.

■

They sought a new stimulus for socially useful labor. They thought originally it would be found in conscientiousness and enthusiasm along with material disinterestedness. And that is why they seized so eagerly on the "great example" of the "subbotniki"—voluntary Saturdays. But this turned out not to be the beginning of a new era, but a tremor of self-sacrifice on the part

of one of the last generations of the Revolution. It can be seen, for example, from provincial materials in Tambov that in 1921 many members of the Party were already trying to get out of the "subbotniki"—and a mark was introduced in the Party record book for participation in "subbotniki." Yes, this outburst lasted another decade, enough for the Komsomols and us, the young Pioneers of those times. But then it came to an end for us too.

And what was next? Where was the stimulus to be sought? Money, piece rates, bonus payments? But all of that carried the acrid smell of recent capitalism, and a long period was required, another generation, for that smell to cease to irritate, so it could be peaceably accepted as "the socialist principle of material incentive."

They dug down deeper into the storage chest of history and dragged out what Marx had called "extraeconomic coercion." In camp and on collective farms this discovery was presented with bared fangs.

And then Frenkel came along and, like a devil sprinkling a poison potion into the boiling caldron, he poured in the *differentiated ration pot.*

There was a famous incantation repeated over and over again: "In the new social structure there can be no place for the discipline of the stick on which serfdom was based, nor the discipline of starvation on which capitalism is based."

And there you are—the Archipelago managed miraculously to combine the one and the other.

All in all, the particular techniques required for this totaled three: (1) *the differentiated ration pot;* (2) *the brigade;* and (3) *two sets of bosses.* (But the third of these was not absolutely necessary: at Vorkuta, for example, there was only one set of bosses, and things hummed.)

And so it was that the Archipelago rested on these three whales, these three pillars.

Or if one considers them *the driving belts,* they certainly made the wheels turn.

We have already explained about the differentiated ration pot. This was a redistribution of bread and cereals aimed at making our zek beat his head against the wall and break his back for the average prisoner's ration, which in parasitical societies is issued to an inactive prisoner. To fix it so that our zek could get his

own lawful ration only in extra dollops of three and a half ounces and by being considered a shock worker. Percentages of output above 100 conferred the right to supplementary spoonfuls of kasha (those previously taken away). What a merciless knowledge of human nature! Neither those pieces of bread nor those cereal patties were comparable with the expenditure of strength that went into earning them. But as one of his eternal, disastrous traits the human being is incapable of grasping the ratio of an object to its price. For a cheap glass of vodka a soldier is roused to attack in a war not his own and lays down his life; in the same way the zek, for those pauper's handouts, slips off a log, gets dunked in the icy freshet of a northern river, or kneads clay for mud huts barefoot in icy water, and because of this those feet are never going to reach the land of *freedom.*

However, the satanical differentiated ration pot was not all-powerful. Not everyone took the bait. Just as serfs at one time or another grasped the truth that "You may have to eat less, but at least you won't have to break your back working," so the zeks, too, understood: in camp it was not the small ration that killed people but the big one. Lazy! Stupid! Insensible half-animals! They don't want that supplementary allotment of rations! They don't want a piece of that nourishing bread, made from a mix of potatoes, vetch, and water! They don't want to be released ahead of term! They don't even want to be posted on the Board of Honor! They don't want to rise to the interests of the construction project and the country; they don't want to fulfill the Five-Year Plans, even though the Five-Year Plans are in the interests of the workers! They wander about the nooks and crannies of the mines, on the floors of construction projects, and they are delighted to hide from the rain in a dark hole, just anything in order not to work.

Not often is it possible to arrange such mass labor projects as in the gravel pit near Yaroslavl: there hundreds of prisoners are clumped together in a small area visible to the naked eyes of the supervisors, and hardly has any one of them stopped moving than he is immediately conspicuous. These are ideal conditions: no one even dares to slow down, to straighten his back, to wipe off the sweat, until up on the hill the flag drops—the signal for a smoking period. How, then, is it to be managed in other cases?

Much thought was applied. And the *brigade* was invented.

Yes, and for that matter, how could we fail to invent it? In our country even the Narodniki—the populists—wanted to enter into socialism through the *obshchina*, the peasant commune, and the Marxists through the *collective*. And what do our newspapers write even nowadays? *"The main thing for a human being is work, and it must be work in a collective!"*

And in camp there is nothing but work and only in a collective! Does that mean that the Corrective Labor Camp is the highest goal of humanity? That the *main thing* . . . has been attained?

How the brigade serves the *psychological enrichment* of its members, the prodding, the surveillance, and the *heightened sense of dignity*, we have already had cause to explain (in Chapter 3). Consistent with the purposes of the brigade, worthy tasks and *brigadiers* (known in camp lingo as "*bugry*"—in other words, "lumps") are selected. Slave-driving the prisoners with club and ration, the brigadier has to cope with the brigade in the absence of the higher-ups, the supervisors, and the convoy. Shalamov cites examples in which the whole membership of the brigade died several times over in the course of one gold-washing season on the Kolyma but the brigadier remained the same. That was the kind of brigadier Perelomov was in Kemerlag. He did not use his tongue, merely his stave. The list of these names would take up many pages here, but I have not compiled it. It is of interest that this kind of brigadier most often came from the thieves, that is, from the lumpenproletariat.

However, what is there to which people cannot adapt? It would be crude on our part not to look closely and observe how the brigade sometimes became a natural constituent cell of the native society of the Archipelago, of the same kind that the family is in freedom. I myself knew such brigades—and more than one too. True, these were not brigades on general work—where someone had to die because otherwise the rest could not survive. These were usually special brigades: electricians, lathe operators, carpenters, painters. The fewer their members (some ten or twelve persons), the more clearly the principle of mutual protection and mutual support appeared in them.[6]

6. This was manifested, too, in big brigades made up of various trades, but only in the hard-labor camps and under special conditions. More about this in Part V.

For such a brigade and for such a role there also had to be a suitable brigadier: moderately hard, well acquainted with all the moral (immoral) laws of Gulag, perspicacious and fair within the brigade; with his own well-worked-out method of coping with the higher-ups, whether it be a hoarse bark or a quiet and underhanded approach; he had to be feared by all the trusties and let no opportunity go by to grab off for the brigade an extra three and a half ounces, padded trousers, a pair of shoes. But he also had to have connections among the influential trusties from whom he could learn all the camp news and impending changes. He needed this for correct leadership. He had to know the work well and the sectors which were advantageous and disadvantageous (and be adept at shoving the neighboring brigade —if there was a neighboring brigade—onto the disadvantageous sectors). With a sharp eye out for the chances for "tukhta" and sensing where best to grab it off within a particular five-day work period: whether through manipulating work norms or total volume. And defend this unwaveringly against the work assigner, when the latter was already waiting with splattering fountain pen to "cut back" the work sheets. And adroit at *greasing the paw* of the norm setter. And knowing who in his brigade was a stoolie (and if this stoolie was not very smart or malicious, then leaving him alone, since otherwise they'd send in a worse one). And he always had to know whom in the brigade he should encourage with a glance, and whom to curse out, and to whom to give a lighter job that particular day. And a brigade like that with a brigadier like that adapts itself to austerity and survives austerely. There is no tenderness here, but no one dies. I worked with brigadiers like that—with Sinebryukhov and Pavel Boronyuk. And if I were to compile a list of others like them, it would be many pages long. And on the basis of many different stories there is a consensus that such efficient and intelligent brigadiers most often originated from among the "kulak" sons.

But what was there to do? If they implacably forced the brigade on the zeks as a form of existence, then what was to be done? It was necessary somehow to adapt to it, was it not? We will die from the work, but we are able to survive only by working. (Of course, this is a questionable philosophy. A better answer would be: Don't teach me to die the way you want, but let me die the way I want. But they won't allow you to anyway, that's what. . . .)

And the choice facing the brigadier could be difficult also: if the logging brigade failed to fulfill the day's norm of seventy-two cubic yards, the brigadier went into the punishment block too. And if you don't want to go to the punishment block, then drive your brigade members to their deaths. Bow down to the stronger!

And the *two sets of bosses* were also convenient—in just the same way that pliers need both a right and left jaw. Two bosses—these were the hammer and the anvil, and they hammered out of the zek what the state required, and when he broke, they brushed him into the garbage bin. Even though the maintenance of a separate administration for the camp compound greatly increased the state's expenditures, and even if out of stupidity, caprice, and vigilance it often complicated the working process, nevertheless they put it there anyway, and this was no mistake. Two bosses—this was two tormenters instead of one, in shifts too, and placed in a situation of competition to see: who could squeeze more out of the prisoner and give him less.

Production, materials, tools, transportation were in the hands of one boss; all that was lacking was manpower. This manpower was brought in every morning by the convoy from the camp and taken away to the camp every evening (or in shifts). During those ten or twelve hours during which the zeks were in the hands of the production bosses there was no need to educate them or correct them, and even if they dropped dead during the course of the workday—this wouldn't disappoint either administration; corpses could be written off more easily than burned-up boards or stolen linseed oil. It was important for the production bosses to compel the prisoners to do more work in a day and to credit them with less in their work sheets, because it was necessary to make up somehow for all the fatal overexpenditures and shortages on the production side; because the trusts were engaged in stealing, and so were the Construction and Installation Administration, and the construction superintendents, and the foremen, and the work site superintendents, and the truck drivers, and the zeks least of all, and then not for themselves (for they had nowhere to take the stuff) but for their camp chiefs and their convoy. And still more than all of that put together was lost through careless and negligent management and also because the zeks didn't take good care of anything either—and there was just one way to make up for all these shortages: underpayment for manpower.

The camp administration, on the other hand, controlled the *work force* alone. ("Rabsila"*—and the tongue certainly knows how to abbreviate!) But this was the decisive factor. The camp chiefs, in fact, used to say: We can squeeze them (the production administration) because they can't find other workers anywhere else. (Where could you find manpower in the taiga and the desert?) Consequently they sought to squeeze more money out in return for their "rabsila," which in part was turned over to the government but in part went for the maintenance of the camp administration itself, in return for its guarding the zeks (from freedom), providing them with food and drink, dressing them, and morally harassing them.

Just as always in our well-thought-out social system, two different *plans* collided head on here too: the production plan, whose objective was to have the lowest possible expenditures for wages, and the MVD plan, whose objective was to extract the largest possible earnings from camp production. To an observer on the sidelines it seems strange: why set one's own plans in conflict with one another? Oh, but there is a profound meaning in it! Conflicting plans flatten the human being. This is a principle which far transcends the barbed wire of the Archipelago.

And what is also important is that these two sets of bosses are by no means hostile to each other, as one might think from their constant squabbles and mutual deceits. Where it is necessary to flatten someone thoroughly, they close ranks very tightly. And even though the camp chief is the zeks' dear father, yet he always willingly recognizes and signs an official affidavit that the zek himself was to blame for his own injury and not the contractor; he will not be very insistent on the zek's having work clothes nor demand ventilation in some section of a plant where there is none (well, if there isn't, there isn't, and what can you do; these are temporary difficulties, and what about the siege of Leningrad?). The camp chief will never refuse the production boss when he is asked to jail a brigadier in the punishment block for rudeness, or a worker for having lost a shovel, or an engineer who hasn't carried out an order the way he should have. Didn't both these chiefs constitute the cream of society in remote settlements—were they not the serf holders of taiga industry? And didn't their wives call on one another?

If nonetheless there is incessant "tukhta" in *padded* work

sheets; if there is a constant attestation to trenches dug and filled which never yawned in the earth's surface, repair of heating systems or lathes which were never out of order, replacement of perfectly sturdy posts which will still be standing there for another ten years—then this is done not at the instigation of the camp chiefs, who are quite calm and confident that the money will flow to the camp one way or another anyway, but by zeks themselves (brigadiers, norm setters, foremen), because all state work norms are the same: they are calculated not for real life on this earth, but for some kind of unearthly ideal on the moon. A human being dedicated, self-sacrificing, healthy, well nourished, and energetic is incapable of fulfilling those norms! And so what are you going to get out of a fagged-out, weak, hungry, and downtrodden convict? The state system of setting work norms prescribes an output impossible on this planet—and in this sense resembles socialist realism in belles-lettres. But if the unsold books are easily shredded later, it is more complicated to cover up industrial "tukhta." However, it is not impossible!

In their constant tail-chasing haste the director and the construction superintendent have, let's say, overlooked or missed noticing, failed to discover, the "tukhta." And the free foremen were either illiterate or drunk, or else well disposed to the zeks (with the expectation, of course, that in a difficult moment the zek brigadier would help them out). And by then the "percentage bonus had been eaten up," and you couldn't pull the bread back out of the belly. Accountants' inspections and audits are notorious for their clumsiness. They turn up "tukhta" after a delay of months or years, when the money paid out for the work has long since flitted away and all that can still be done is to bring charges against one of the free employees or else smudge it up and *write it off*.

Three pillars on which the Archipelago is propped were set there by the Leadership: the differentiated ration pot, the work brigade, and the two sets of bosses. And the fourth and main pillar was "tukhta," and it was put there by the Archipelago natives and by life itself.

For "tukhta" it is essential to have energetic, enterprising brigadiers, but production chiefs from among the zeks are even more necessary. No few of them were foremen, norm setters, planners, economists, because you just wouldn't drag free people

off to those distant places. Some zeks in those positions forgot who they were, became more cruel than free workers, trampled on their brother prisoners, and made their way over dead bodies to their own release ahead of term. Others, on the contrary, retained a distinct consciousness of their motherland, the Archipelago, and introduced reasonable moderation in the management of production and a reasonable share of "tukhta" in their accounting. There was a risk for them in this: not the risk of getting a new *term*, because the terms were already piled high anyway and their Code articles were harsh, but the risk of losing their position, angering the chiefs, landing in a bad prisoner transport—and thus perishing silently. And therefore their staunchness and intelligence were all the more glorious in that they helped their brothers to survive.

Vasily Grigoryevich Vlasov, for example, whose acquaintance we have already made in connection with the Kady trial, was that kind of person. Throughout his whole long sentence (he served nineteen years without any interruption) he retained that same stubborn self-assurance which characterized his conduct during the trial and with which he had mocked Kalinin and the commutation of his death sentence. Through all these years, when he was dried up from starvation and breaking his back on general work, he perceived himself not as a scapegoat but as a genuine political prisoner and even as a "revolutionary," as he used to describe himself in heart-to-heart conversations. And when, thanks to his naturally sharp administrative grasp, which in his case substituted for his incomplete schooling in economics, he held jobs as a trusty in production posts, Vlasov sought not only to postpone his own death but also the chance to patch up the whole cart so it was easier for the rest of the fellows to pull it along.

In the forties, on one of the Ust-Vym logging camp sites (and UstVymlag was distinct from the general pattern in that it had only *one* unified set of bosses: the camp itself ran its logging, did its own auditing, and was responsible for plan fulfillment to the Ministry of the Timber Industry), Vlasov simultaneously combined the duties of norm setter and planner. He was the head of the whole thing there, and in winter, in order to provide support for the sloggers out logging, he credited their brigades with fictitious cubic yards of wood cut. One of the winters was

particularly severe; and working just as hard as they could the zeks fulfilled the work norms by only 60 percent but received rations for having fulfilled 125 percent of norm; and with the help of these beefed-up rations they managed to last out the winter without halting work even one day. However, shipments of the "felled" (on paper) timber were far behind schedule, and the camp chief heard some evil rumors. In March he sent a commission of foremen into the woods—and they turned up a shortage of 10,500 cubic yards of timber! The enraged chief summoned Vlasov, who heard him out and then said to him: "Give 'em, chief, *five days* in the brig. They're all sluts. They were too lazy to get out into the woods because the snow there is still deep. Set up a new commission with me as the chairman." And thereupon, with his own sensible troika, Vlasov, without leaving his office, drew up an official document and "found" all the missing timber. The chief was quieted down for the time being; but in May there was more trouble: they were still shipping out too little timber, and the higher-ups kept asking questions. So the chief called in Vlasov again. Vlasov was a short fellow, but he always retained his vigorous rooster-like bearing, and this time he didn't even pretend: the timber just didn't exist. "So how could you have drawn up a false document, blankety, blank, blank, blank!" Vlasov replied: "Do you think it would have been better for you to go to jail yourself? After all, ten and a half thousand cubic yards is a full *ten-ruble bill* for a free employee, and even for a Chekist it's a fiver." The chief cursed him out, but by this time it was too late to punish Vlasov; the whole thing depended on him. "Well, what's to be done now?" Vlasov answered: "Just wait till the roads have completely dissolved in mud." And the time came when the winter roads had all dissolved completely, and the summer logging trails were still impassable too. And at this point Vlasov brought the chief a detailed and watertight report for his signature, to be sent on to the administration higher-up. In it he proved that because of the highly successful timber-felling operations of the past winter it had been quite impossible to move 10,500 cubic yards out of the forests on the sledge trails. Neither could this timber be hauled out through the swampy forests. Next he gave estimates for the cost of a corduroy road to get the timber out, and he proved that the haulage would cost more than the timber

was worth. So that in a year's time, because the logs were going to be lying there in the swamp for a whole summer and autumn, they would be unsuitable for lumber and acceptable to any possible customer only for firewood. And the administration agreed with these literate conclusions, which they were not ashamed to show any other commission—and therefore the whole 10,500 cubic yards of timber were written off.

And so it was that the trees were felled, and *eaten up*, and written off—and stood once again erect and proud in their green coniferous garb. And, in fact, the state paid very reasonably for these dead cubic yards: a few hundred extra loaves of black, gluey, watery bread. The thousands of trees and the hundreds of lives which were saved were of no account on the profit-and-loss sheet. Because this kind of wealth was never counted in the Archipelago.

In all probability Vlasov was not the only one who had been so perspicacious as to play the swindler, because from 1947 on they introduced a new system in all logging operations: complex work gangs and complex work brigades. And now the lumberjacks were combined with the teamsters in one work gang, and the brigade was only credited with timber hauled out to the "slide" on the river bank, to the site of the spring log drive.

And so what happened then? Did this burst the balloon of the "tukhta"? Hardly! It even flourished! It expanded out of necessity, and the mass of workers nourished on it grew larger and larger. For those among our readers who are not bored with this, let's go into it more deeply:

1. The zeks were not permitted to accompany the logs farther than the slide on the river bank. (Who would convoy them down the river? Vigilance!) Therefore an expediter of the log-rafting office, which was staffed with free lumberjacks, accepted the timber from the camp dispatcher (for all the brigades) at the river. Well, now, he, of course, was strict in his receipts? Not at all. The camp dispatcher would inflate the figures as much as he had to on behalf of the logging brigades, and the expediter of the log-rafting office was agreeable to the whole deal.

2. And here is why. The log-rafting office also had the problem of feeding its own free workers and their work norms were equally impossible. And the log-rafting office listed all

of this nonexistent, fictitious timber as having been rafted downriver.

3. At the general landing and sorting point downriver where the timber was collected from all the logging sectors, there was a *bourse*, which was a landing area for logs. Here again zeks were doing the work, attached to that selfsame UstVymlag (the fifty-two "islands" of UstVymlag were scattered over a territory 96 miles square—now that is what our Archipelago is like!). The dispatcher of the log-rafting office was quite at ease: the camp expediter would now accept back all the "tukhta"—in the second place so as not to betray his own camp, which had previously "delivered" it to the slide, and in the first place so as to feed *its own* prisoners working at the landing point with that same fictitious timber! (They, too, had their own fantastic work norms and they needed their *crust* too!) At this point, however, the camp expediter had to toil a bit for the sake of society: he not only had to accept the timber by total volume but also list it, existing and fictitious, by diameters and lengths, in a complete schedule. Now here was a benefactor for you! (Vlasov worked at this job too.)

4. After the "bourse" came the sawmill which processed the logs into cut lumber. Once more the workers were zeks. The brigades were given rations on the basis of their volume of raw timber processed, and the "extra" fictitious timber was just exactly what they needed in order to increase their own percentage output.

5. Next came the lumber yard for the completed product, which was required, according to state norms, to have 65 percent of the amount of raw timber received by the sawmill. Thus it was that 65 percent of the fictitious timber moved invisibly into the lumber yard (and the mythical lumber was likewise inventoried by sorts: wavy-edged slab, construction lumber; by thickness of board, edged, unedged). The lumberyard workers, too, got their food out of that same fictitious timber.

But what happened then? The fictitious lumber was shut up in the lumber yard, where it was guarded by the Camp Guard. And there could not be any more uncontrolled "losses." And who at this point was going to answer for the "tukhta"? And how?

At this point another great principle of the Archipelago came

to the aid of the principle of "tukhta." This was the principle of *rubber,* in other words stretching things out with interminable delays. Once on the books, the fictitious production kept being carried over from one year to another. Whenever there was inventory-taking in this wild Archipelago backwoods, all those engaged in it were, after all, friends and all understood. You wouldn't go around moving every board in the place just for the sake of the audit. And fortunately a certain percentage of fictitious lumber could "spoil" from being kept too long and could be written off. And they would fire one manager of the lumber yard and then another and put them to work as work-norm setters. And how many people had been fed in the meanwhile!

Here is what they tried to do too: when they loaded lumber into railroad cars for shipment to buyers (there was no customer expediter up there, and the railroad cars would subsequently be scattered all over the country on the basis of bills of lading), they tried similarly to "ship" the fictitious lumber as well, in other words to inflate the amount shipped (and this fed the stevedore brigades, let's note). The railroad put a seal on the car. It couldn't care less. After a certain length of time somewhere in Armavir or Krivoi Rog they would break the seal on the car and open it up, and document the amount actually received. If the underweight was moderate, then all these differences in volume would be collected in some schedule or other and it would be up to the State Planning Commission to account for them. If the underweight was outrageous, the recipient would send a claim to UstVymlag, but these claims moved in a flood of millions of other papers and were stapled in a file somewhere and in time simply went out like a light. After all, they simply could not stand up against people's pressure *to live.* (And no one was going to send the carload of lumber back from Armavir: you took what you got—there was no timber in the South.)

Now let us note the fact that the state and the Ministry of the Timber Industry made serious use in their economic reports of these fictitiously inflated figures for the production of cut and processed timber. They were useful to the Ministry too.[7]

But probably the most surprising thing was this: it would seem

7. And this is how "tukhta," like many of the Archipelago's problems, could not be kept confined to it, but acquired a nationwide significance.

that there should have been *a shortage* of timber because of the fictitious inflation of quantities at every stage of its movement. However, the fact was that the expediter at the landing "bourse" managed to add so much fictitious timber to deliveries in the course of the summer season that by fall the timber-rafting office had *surpluses* waiting in the water! They had not been touched. And they must not be left in the river for the winter, because if they were, it would be necessary in the spring to call in a plane to bomb them loose. And therefore this *surplus* timber which no one needed was allowed in late autumn *to float downstream into the White Sea!*

Is that miraculous? Strange and wonderful? But it didn't just happen in one place. At the lumber yards in Unzhlag there was always *surplus* lumber left over which hadn't been loaded into railroad cars, and which was no longer listed as belonging to anyone anywhere! And for years after some lumber yard had been totally shut down people would subsequently journey to it from nearby camps for ownerless dry firewood, and burn in their stoves the stripped pit props which had taken so much suffering to produce.

And all this was a matter of attempting *to survive*, not to enrich oneself, and certainly not to plunder the state.

The state cannot be so excessively fierce—and force its subjects into deceit.

And here is what the prisoners used to say: *"Without 'tukhta' and ammonal, never could we have built the canal!"*

So all that is what the Archipelago stands on.

Chapter 6

■

"They've Brought the Fascists!"

"They've brought the Fascists! They've brought the Fascists!" the young zek lads and girls shouted excitedly, running through the camp when our two trucks, each loaded with thirty *Fascists*, entered the perimeter of the small rectangle of the Novy Iyerusalim* Camp.

We had just experienced one of the supreme hours of our life —the one hour's drive from Moscow's Krasnaya Presnya Prison—what is called a short-distance prisoner transport. Though we had spent the ride with our knees hunched up in the rear of the trucks, nonetheless all the air, the speed, the colors were ours. Oh, forgotten brightness of the world! The streetcars were red, the trolley-buses sky-blue, the crowd in white and many-colored. Do they themselves see these colors as they crowd onto the buses? And on top of this today, for some reason, all the buildings and the lampposts were decorated with banners and streamers, some sort of unexpected holiday—August 14, coinciding with the holiday of our liberation from prison. (On this day the capitulation of Japan had been announced, ending the seven-day war.) On the Volokolamsk Highway a whirlwind of scents of new-mown hay and of the early evening freshness of the meadows swirled around our shaven heads. This meadow breeze—who could breathe it in more greedily than prisoners? Real genuine green blinded our eyes, grown used to gray and more gray. I turned up on the transport with Gammerov and

Ingal, and we sat next to each other, and it seemed to us as if we were going to a gay dacha—a country house. The end of such a bewitching journey could not be something dismal.

And then we jumped from the trucks, stretched our numbed legs and backs, and looked around. We liked the compound of Novy Iyerusalim. It was even attractive: it was surrounded not by a solid fence but merely by an interwoven barbed-wire fence, and in every direction were visible the hilly, lively village and dacha countryside of the Zvenigorod land. It was as if we were part of that gay milieu; we could see the earth just like those who came here to rest and enjoy themselves, and we could even see it on a larger, deeper scale (for our eyes had grown used to flat walls, flat sleeping boards, and shallow cells), and to us it seemed even more succulent: the greenery which had faded by mid-August blinded us, and perhaps, too, it seemed to have so much succulence because the sun was setting.

"So you are the Fascists? Are all of you Fascists?" the approaching zeks asked us hopefully. And having confirmed that yes, we were the Fascists—they immediately scurried off and left the scene. There was nothing else about us that interested them.

(We already knew, of course, that "the Fascists" was a nickname for the 58's, introduced by the sharp-eyed thieves and very much approved of by the chiefs; previously they had well named the 58's—*KR's*. But then all that had grown stale, and a catchy label was needed.)

After our swift trip in the fresh air, here it seemed warmer, and because of that cozier. We were still looking around the tiny compound, with its two-story building of brick for men, and the women's building, which was wooden with an attic story, and some peasant-style tumble-down sheds for auxiliary services; and then at the long black shadows which lay everywhere in the fields, cast by the trees and the buildings, and at the high chimney of the brickyard, and at the already flaming windows of its two buildings.

"Well? Things aren't so bad here, it seems. . . ." We spoke to one another, trying to convince each other and ourselves.

One young fellow, with that sharply alert and hostile expression which we had already begun to notice in others, lingered near us longer than the rest, inspecting the Fascists with interest. His well-worn black cap sat crookedly forward on his forehead.

He kept his hands in his pockets, and he stood there just like that, listening to our chatter.

"Not bad!" His chest shook. Twisting his lips, he looked us over contemptuously once again and hurled out: "Star-va-tion station! You'll kick the bucket!"

And spitting under our feet, he went out. He found it unbearable to listen any longer to such idiots.

Our hearts fell.

The first night in camp! You are already being borne, borne along a slippery slide down, down—and somewhere there must be still a saving protruding ledge which you have to catch hold of, but you don't know where it is. Everything that was worst in your entire upbringing has come alive inside you—everything suspicious, gloomy, grasping, cruel, instilled there by hungry queues, by the blatant injustice of the strong. This worst in you has been even more aroused, even more stirred up inside you, by the preceding rumors about the camps: just don't get put on *general work!* The wolfish camp world! Here they tear you to pieces alive! Here they stomp on he who has stumbled! Just don't go on *general work!* But how can you avoid it? Which way is one to flee? One has to *give* something! One has to *give* to someone! But what in particular? And to whom? And how is it done?

Not an hour has gone by—and a fellow aboard our same transport comes up with a restrained smile: he has been named a construction engineer in the camp compound. And one more: he has been given permission to open a barbershop for the free workers at the factory. And yet another: he ran into an old acquaintance, and he is going to go to work in the planning section. Your heart winces: all this is skin off your back! They will survive in the offices and the barbershops. And you will perish. Perish.

The compound. Two hundred paces from barbed wire to barbed wire, and you can't go close to it either. Yes, all around you the Zvenigorod hills will gleam green, but in here is a starvation mess hall, and a stone dungeon for a penalty isolator, and a miserable lean-to over a burner for "individual cooking," a rotten shed of a bath, a gray booth of a tumble-down latrine with rotting seats, and—nowhere to hide from it. This was it. Perhaps this little island would be the last piece of earth in your life which your feet were destined to tromp on.

In all the rooms bare *multiple bunks*—"vagonki"—were installed. The multiple bunk was the invention of the Archipelago, an adaptation for the sleep of the natives never encountered anywhere else in the world: two stories of four wooden panels on two cross-shaped supports placed at the head and at the feet. When one sleeper stirred . . . three others rocked.

They did not issue mattresses in this camp, nor sacks to stuff with straw. The words "bed linen" were unknown to the natives of the Novy Iyerusalim island; no sheets or pillowcases existed here; and they did not issue or launder underwear. You had what you wore, and you had to look after it yourself. And the manager of camp property had never heard the word "pillow." The only pillows were those you owned, and were had only by women and thieves. In the evening, when you lay down on the naked panel, you could take off your shoes. But take into consideration that your shoes would be swiped. Better sleep with shoes on. Better not scatter your clothes about either—they'd swipe them too. On going out to work in the morning you must not leave anything in the barracks; whatever the thieves did not bother to take the jailers would, announcing, *"It's forbidden!"* In the morning you would go out to work just as nomads depart from a camp site, leaving it even cleaner: you would leave neither the ashes from your bonfires nor the bones of devoured animals; the room would be empty, totally bare, and you could even turn it over for others to occupy. And your own sleeping panel would have nothing to distinguish it from all the others: bare, greasy, polished by bodies.

But you couldn't cart anything off to work with you either. You would gather up your chattels in the morning, stand in line at the storeroom for personal belongings, and hide them in a bag or a suitcase. You'd return from work and stand in line again at the storeroom and take with you what you could foresee you would want overnight. Better not make a mistake, because you'd not get to the storeroom a second time.

And thus—for ten years! Hold your head high!

The morning shift returned to camp sometime after two. They washed up, had lunch, stood in line at the storeroom—and the bell rang for roll call. Everyone in the camp formed up in rows, and an illiterate jailer with a plywood board went around, slobbering on his pencil, wrinkling up his forehead wisely, and

whispering over and over. He recounted the line-up several times, he went over all the buildings several times, leaving the line-up standing there. Either he was wrong in his arithmetic or he was confused as to how many were ill, and how many were imprisoned in the ShIzo under orders "not to be allowed out." This senseless expenditure of time kept dragging on for a long while—an hour, sometimes an hour and a half. And those to whom time was precious—even though this need is not very developed in our people and not at all among zeks—those who even in camp wanted to accomplish something, felt themselves particularly helpless and humiliated. It was forbidden to read "in line-up." My boys, Gammerov and Ingal, stood with closed eyes, composing either verses or prose or letters—but you were not permitted to stand like that in line-up because it looked as though you were sleeping and this was an insult to the roll call, and furthermore your ears were not closed, and the mother oaths and the stupid jokes and the dismal conversations—all kept swarming in. (The year was 1945 and Norbert Wiener would soon formulate cybernetics; the atom had already been split—and here pale-faced intellectuals were standing in a row waiting to hear the command, "Stand still, don't turn!"—while the stupid, red-mugged idiot lazily whispered his total!) The roll call was completed, and now, at 5:30, one could go and lie down and take a nap (because the night before had been short and the coming night might be even shorter). However, dinner would be in an hour. The time was all cut up into bits.

The camp administration was so lazy and so untalented it did not even have the desire and initiative to separate the workers on the three different shifts into different rooms. From seven to eight, after dinner, the first shift could have begun to rest, but those who were fed and fresh wanted no part of peace, and the thieves on their feather comforters were just beginning their card games, their yelling, and their little dramatic numbers. One thief of an Azerbaizanian type, creeping up in an exaggerated way, made the rounds of the room by jumping from bunk to bunk on the upper panels and roared out at the sloggers: "That's how Napoleon went to Moscow for tobacco." Having got himself tobacco he returned by the same route, stepping on and across people and shouting: "That's how Napoleon fled to Paris." Every escapade of the thieves was so astonishing and unusual that we

could only gape at them. From nine in the evening, the night shift was shaking the bunks, tramping about, making preparations to leave, and taking their things off to the storeroom. They were marched out at 10 P.M.—at last it seemed we could sleep! But after ten the day shift returned. And now they were the ones tramping heavily about, shaking the bunks, washing up, going for things in the storeroom, and getting dinner. Only from perhaps half-past eleven on did the exhausted camp sleep.

But at a quarter after four the ring of singing metal was wafted over our small camp and across the sleepy collective farm around us, where the old folks still remember very well the chimes of the Istra church bells. Perhaps our silver-voiced camp bell came from the monastery also and had grown used, while there, to getting the monks up for prayer and work at the sound of the first cockcrow.

"Get up, first shift!" the jailer shouted into each room. Head dizzy from insufficient sleep, eyes still not unglued—no chance to wash! And you don't have to get dressed. That's how you slept. So straight off to the mess hall. You enter, still staggering with sleep. Everyone pushes ahead and is absolutely certain of what he wants. Some rush for their bread ration, others for gruel. You are the only one wandering about like a lunatic, beneath the dim lamps, unable in the steam of the gruel to see where to find either bread or gruel. Finally you receive nineteen and a quarter ounces of bread fit for a feast and an earthenware bowl with something hot and black. This is "black cabbage soup"—made from nettles. The black shreds of the boiled leaves lie in the blackish empty water. There is no fish, meat, nor fat. Not even salt: in cooking, the nettles soak up all the salt thrown in and therefore they don't put any in. If tobacco is camp gold, then salt is camp silver, and the cooks save it up. Unsalted nettle soup is a repulsive poison! You are hungry, but you can't pour it into yourself.

Lift up your eyes. Not to the heavens but to the ceiling. Your eyes have already grown accustomed to the dim lamps and you can now make out along the wall the long slogan written on wallpaper in the favorite red letters:

"WHOEVER DOES NOT WORK DOES NOT EAT!"

And goose pimples run up and down your chest. Oh, wise men from the Cultural and Educational Section! How satisfied

you were when you sought out that great evangelical and Communist slogan—for the camp mess hall. But in the Gospel of St. Luke it says: "The labourer is worthy of his hire." And in the Book of Deuteronomy it says: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn."

And what you have is an exclamation point! Thank you on behalf of the ox treading out the corn! And henceforth I will understand that you are not at all squeezing my emaciated neck because of shortages, that you are choking me not simply out of greed—but out of the bright principle of the onrushing society! Except that I do not see in camp those who work eating. And I do not see in camp those who don't work . . . starving.

Day is breaking. The predawn August heavens grow pale. Only the brightest of the stars are still visible in the sky. To the southeast, above the brickyard where we will now be taken, are Procyon and Sirius—the alpha stars of Canis Minor and Canis Major. Everything has abandoned us along with the jailers, even the heavens: the dogs in the heavens, like those on earth, are on the leashes of guards. The dogs bark madly, leap ahead, try to get at us. They are gloriously trained on human meat.

The first day in camp! I do not wish even my worst enemy that day! The folds of the brain are all mixed up because of the impossibility of absorbing the entire scope of the cruelty. How will it be? What will happen to me? My head keeps grinding it over and over. And the newcomers are all given the most meaningless work possible, just to keep them busy while things are sorted out. An endless day. You carry hand barrows or you push wheelbarrows along, and with each wheelbarrow load the day grows shorter by five or ten minutes only, and your mind remains free solely in order to keep turning over and over: How will it be? How will it be?

We see the absurdity of rolling this waste along, and we try to chat between wheelbarrows. It seems as if we have already become exhausted from those very first wheelbarrow loads, we have already given them our strength—and how are we going to go on pushing them for eight years? We try to talk about something in which we can feel our strength and our individuality. Ingal describes the funeral of Tynyanov, whose pupil he considers himself—and we argue about historical novels: Ought anyone dare write them? After all, an historical novel is a novel about

things the author never saw. Burdened by distance and the maturity of his own era, the author can try as much as he pleases to convince himself that he has come to *comprehend*, but, after all, all the same he is unable to *live it*, and does this mean that an historical novel is first of all fantasy?

At this point they began to call into the office the zeks from the new prisoner transport, several at a time, for their assignments, and all of us left our wheelbarrows. The previous day Ingal had managed to get to know somebody—and as a result he, a literary person, was assigned to the factory bookkeeping office, even though he got figures ridiculously mixed up, and in all his born days had never done calculations on an abacus. Gammerov was incapable of begging and grabbing off a spot even to save his life. He was made an unskilled laborer. He came over, lay down on the grass, and during this last little hour in which he didn't have to be an unskilled laborer he told me about the persecuted poet Pavel Vasilyev, of whom I had never heard a word. When had these boys managed to read and learn so much?

I bit on a stalk of grass and wavered—which of my cards should I *play*—mathematics or my experience as an officer? I was unable to withdraw proudly like Boris. Once I had been brought up with other ideals, but from the thirties cruel life had rubbed us in only one direction: to go after and get.

And it happened quite naturally that when I crossed the threshold of the brickyard director's office I had tucked the stomach fold in my field shirt beneath my broad officer's belt along the sides. (And I had intentionally dressed up for this day too, disregarding the fact that I was to wheel a wheelbarrow.) My high collar was severely buttoned up.

"An officer?" the director immediately surmised.

"Yes, sir!"

"Do you have experience *working with people?*"[1]

"I do."

"What did you command?"

"An artillery battalion." (I lied on the wing—a battery seemed too small to me.) He looked at me with both trust and doubt.

"And will you manage here? It's hard here."

"I think I'll manage!" I replied. (After all, I didn't understand

1. Once more "with people," please note.

myself what a noose I was sticking my neck into. The main thing was to go after and get.) He squinted a bit and thought. (He was calculating how ready I was to remake myself into a dog and whether my jaw was firm.)

"All right. You will be a shift foreman in the clay pit."

And one other former officer, Nikolai Akimov, was also named a foreman in the clay pit. He and I went out of the office feeling kinship, gladness. We could not have understood then, even had we been told, that we had chosen the standard—for army men—servile beginning of a sentence. It was clear from Akimov's unintellectual and unassuming face that he was an open lad and a good soldier.

"What's the director scaring us with? Does he think we can't cope with twenty men? There's no mine field and no one is bombing us—what can't we cope with?"

We wanted to recreate inside ourselves our former front-line self-assurance. We were pups and we did not understand to what extent the Archipelago was unlike the front, to what degree its war of siege was more difficult than our war of explosives.

In the army even a fool and a nonentity can command, and, in fact, the higher the post he occupies, the greater will be his success. While a squad commander has to have a quick grasp of things, inexhaustible energy and courage, and understanding of the soldier's heart—it is quite enough for one marshal or another to be peevish, to curse, and to be able to sign his name. Everything else will be done for him, and the plan of operations will be brought him by the operations section of his staff, some bright officer with an unknown name. The soldiers will execute the orders not because they are convinced of their correctness (for often it is precisely the reverse), but because orders come from top to bottom through the hierarchy, and they are the orders of a machine, and whoever does not carry them out will have his head cut off.

But in the Archipelago it is not at all like that for the zek who has been appointed to command other zeks. The whole golden shoulder-board hierarchy is not towering behind your back and not at all supporting your orders; it will betray you and toss you out as soon as you're unable to carry out those orders with your own strength, your own skill. And the skill here is: either your fist, or pitiless destruction through starvation, or such a pro-

found knowledge of the Archipelago that your order also appears to each prisoner as his own salvation.

A greenish Arctic moisture has to replace the warm blood inside you—only then can you command zeks.

And right then, during those very days, they started to bring from the ShIzo—the Penalty Isolator—to the clay pit, as the heaviest work of all, a penalty brigade—a group of thieves who just a bit earlier had almost cut the throat of the camp chief. (They had not wanted to cut his throat, because they were not such fools as that, but to frighten him so he would send them back to Krasnaya Presnya; they recognized Novy Iyerusalim as a deadly place where you'd never get enough to eat.) They were brought in at the end of my shift. They lay down in the clay pit in a sheltered spot, bared their short, thick arms and legs, their fat tattooed stomachs and chests, and lay there sunning themselves, content to be out of the wet cellar of the ShIzo. I went up to them in my military attire and precisely, properly, proposed that they set to work. The sun put them in a benign mood, and therefore they only laughed and sent me to the well-known mother. I was enraged and confused and departed empty-handed. In the army I would have begun with the order "Stand up!" But here it was quite clear that if any one of them did stand up—it would be solely to stick a knife in my ribs. And while I was cudgeling my brains over what to do (after all, the rest of the clay pit was watching and might also quit work)—my shift came to an end. Only thanks to this circumstance am I here today to write this study of the Archipelago.

I was replaced by Akimov. The thieves continued to lie there sunning themselves. He gave them one order, the second time he shouted a command at them (maybe even "Stand up!"), and the third time he threatened them with the camp chief—and they chased him, and in a low spot in the clay pit knocked him down and smashed him in the kidneys with a crowbar. He was taken directly from the factory to the provincial prison hospital, and this brought his career as a commander to an end and maybe his prison sentence and maybe his life. (In all probability, the director had appointed us as dummies to be beaten up by these thieves.)

My own short career at the clay pit lasted several days longer than Akimov's, but brought me not the satisfaction I had expected,

only a constant spiritual depression. At 6 A.M. I entered the working compound more deeply despondent than if I had been going there to dig the clay myself. I wandered around the clay pit like one quite lost, hating both it and my own role in it.

From the wet pressing mill to the clay pit there was a trolley track. At the spot where the level area ended and its rails dipped into the workings, a windlass stood on a platform. This motor-driven windlass was one of the few miracles of mechanization in the whole brickyard. Along the entire line from clay pit to windlass and from the windlass to the pressing mill, the sloggers had to push the cars loaded with clay. Only on the rise out of the clay pit were the cars dragged up by the windlass. The clay pit occupied a distant corner of the brickyard compound, and it was a surface plowed up by cave-ins—the cave-ins branching off in all directions like ravines, leaving between them untouched prominences. The clay lay right up to the surface, and the stratum was not thin. One could probably have mined it deep down or else across its whole width continuously, but no one knew how it should be done, and no one made a plan for mining it, and it all was managed by the brigadier of the morning shift, Barinov—a cocky young Muscovite, a nonpolitical offender with a pretty face. Barinov worked the clay pit simply where it was most convenient; he excavated where the most clay could be dug for the least work. He never went too deep—so the cars wouldn't have to be pushed up too steep a slope. Properly speaking, Barinov was in charge of all eighteen to twenty men who worked during my shift in the clay pit. He was the only genuine boss of shift: he knew the lads, he *fed* them, in other words got for them big rations, and each day wisely decided himself how many cars of clay were to be delivered so that there would be neither too few nor too many. I liked Barinov, and if I had been somewhere in prison with him as a bunk neighbor, we would have got along very gaily. And we could have got along right here too. I should have gone to him and had a big laugh with him over the fact that the director had appointed me to the position of intermediate watchdog—while I understood nothing. But my officer's training did not permit this! And I tried to maintain a severe bearing with him and to get him to knuckle under, though not only I, and not only he, but the entire brigade, could see that I was as much of a useless

meddler as a District Party instructor during crop sowing. It made Barinov angry that they had installed a stuffed shirt over him, and more than once he mocked me cleverly in front of the brigade. In the case of anything I considered necessary to do he immediately proved to me that it was impossible. On the other hand, loudly shouting, "Foreman! *Foreman!*" he would on occasion summon me to various corners of the clay pit and ask me for instructions: how to take up the old trolley tracks and lay new ones again; how a wheel that had jumped off the axle should be put back again; or what to do about the allegedly nonfunctioning windlass; or where the shovels should be taken to be sharpened. Already weakening from day to day in my impulse to command, in the face of his ridicule, I was by then quite happy if he simply ordered the fellows to dig that morning (he didn't always do it) and did not annoy me with his vexatious questions.

Thereupon I quietly kept out of the way and hid from my subordinates and my chiefs behind the high piles of earth that had been carted away, set myself down on the ground and sat stock-still with sinking heart. My spirit was numb from my first few days in camp. Oh, this was not prison! Prison has wings! Prison is a treasure house of thought. It was gay and easy to starve and argue in prison. And just try that here—ten years of starvation, work, and silence. Just try it! The iron caterpillar track was already dragging me to the grinder. I was helpless. I didn't know how, but I wanted to slip off to one side. To catch my breath. To come to myself. To lift my head and to see.

Over there, beyond the barbed wire, across a vale, was a knoll. On it was a little village—ten houses. The rising sun illuminated it with its peaceful rays. So close to us—and the very opposite of a camp! (For that matter, it, too, was a camp, but one forgets that.) For a long time there was no motion at all there, but then a woman walked by with a pail, and a tiny child ran across the weeds in the street. A cock crowed and a cow mooed. And there in the clay pit we could hear everything perfectly. And a mongrel barked—what a lovely voice that was too! It was not a convoy dog![2]

2. When there are discussions about universal disarmament, I am always quite concerned; after all, no one has included guard dogs in the lists of forbidden weapons. And yet they make life more insufferable for human beings than do rockets.

And from every sound there and from the very immobility itself a holy peace flooded into my soul. And I know for certain that if they should say to me at that very moment: That's your freedom! Just live in that village until your death! Renounce cities and the vanities of this world, your passing fancies, your convictions, the truth—renounce it all and live in that village (but not as a collective farmer!), look at the sun every morning and harken to the roosters! Are you willing? . . . Oh, not only willing, but, good Lord, please send me a life like that! I felt that I would be unable to last out in camp.

On the other side of the brickyard, invisible to me at the moment, a passenger train roared by on the Rzhev Line. In the clay pit they shouted: "The Trusties' Train!" Every train was familiar. They kept time by them. "The Trusties' Train" passed by at a quarter to nine, and at nine o'clock, separately, not at shift-changing time, they would conduct *the trusties* from the camp to the brickyard—the office employees and those in positions of responsibility. The favorite train was at half-past one, the "Provider," after which we soon went to line-up and to lunch.

My zek supervisor, Olga Petrovna Matronina, was brought to work along with the trusties, and sometimes, if her heart was anxious about the work, even earlier, by special convoy. I sighed, came out of my hiding place, and went along the clay pit trolley track to the wet pressing factory—to report.

The entire brickyard consisted of two plants—for wet pressing and dry pressing. Our clay pit worked only for the wet-pressing plant and the chief of the wet pressing was Matronina, an engineer-specialist in silicates. What kind of an engineer she was I do not know, but she was fussy and stubborn. She was one of those unshakable loyalists—an orthodox Communist—of whom I had already encountered a few in the cells (there were not many of them in general), on whose mountain peak, however, I myself could not cling. On the basis of the "letter" section, ChS, as a member of the family of one shot, she had received eight years from an OSO, and right now she was serving out her last months. True, they had not released any politicals throughout the war, and she, too, would be held until the notorious Special Decree. But even that did not cast any shadow on her state of mind; she served the Party, and it was unimportant whether in freedom or in camp. She was from a reserve for rare animals. In camp she tied a red scarf around her head and only a red scarf, even

though she was already over forty. (Not one camp girl wore a scarf like that in the brickyard, and not one free Komsomol girl either.) She bore no grudge for her husband's execution, nor for her own eight years of imprisonment. All these injustices had been caused, in her opinion, by individual Yagoda or Yezhov henchmen, and under Comrade Beria the only arrests being made were just. Seeing me in the uniform of a Soviet officer, she said at our first meeting: "Those who arrested me can now see the proofs of my orthodoxy." Not long before she had written a letter to Kalinin, and she quoted from it to all who wished or were forced to listen: "My long sentence has not broken my will in the struggle for the Soviet government, for Soviet industry."

Meanwhile when Akimov had come and reported to her that the thieves refused to obey him, she herself did not go to explain to this socially friendly element that their conduct was harming industry, but she pulled him up short: "You have to *compel* them! That's why you were appointed!" Akimov was beaten up, and she made no effort to struggle further, but merely wrote the camp: "Don't send us that contingent any more." She also accepted very calmly the fact that in her factory young girls worked eight hours straight at automatic machines; they were confined uninterruptedly for the whole eight-hour period to monotonous motions at the conveyor belt. She said: "There is nothing to be done; there are more important sectors than that for mechanization." The day before, Saturday, there had been a rumor going the rounds that they would again not give us our Sunday off (and that's exactly what happened). The young girls at the automatic machines clustered around her and said to her bitterly: "Olga Petrovna! Are they really going to take our Sunday away from us again? After all, this is the third in a row! The war's over!" Wearing her red scarf, she indignantly tossed her dry, dark profile, which wasn't a woman's, nor a man's either: "Girls! What right have we to a Sunday? The construction project in Moscow is being held up because there are no bricks!" (In other words, of course, she didn't know anything about any particular construction project to which our bricks were being sent, but in her mind's eye she could see that big generalized construction project, and here were these young girls, so vile as to want to wash their things.)

I was necessary to Matronina in order to *double* the number of

cars of clay in one shift. She took no account of the strength of the sloggers, the condition of the cars, or the capacity of the pressing plant, but merely demanded that it be doubled! (And how could an outsider unacquainted with the setup double the number of carloads except with his fist?) I did not double the output, and by and large the output did not change by one carload under me—and Matronina, merciless, scolded me in Barinov's presence and that of the workers, without being able to get through her woman's head that which the least sergeant knows: that one must not dress down even a corporal in the presence of a private. And then on one occasion, admitting my total defeat in the clay pit, and therefore my incapacity to *direct*, I went to Matronina and, as gently as I could, asked her:

"Olga Petrovna! I am a good mathematician; I do figures quickly. I have heard that you need an accountant in the plant. Take me!"

"An accountant?" she raged, and her cruel face grew even darker, and the ends of her red scarf wound about the back of her head. "I'll put any wisp of a girl to work as an accountant, but what we need are *commanders of production*. How many loads are you short for your shift? Be off with you!" And, like a new Pallas Athena, with outstretched arm she sent me back to the clay pit.

And a day later the position of foreman of the clay pit was abolished, and I was fired, not just straightforwardly but vengefully. Matronina summoned Barinov and gave him his orders:

"Put him to work with a crowbar and don't take your eyes off him! Make him load six cars a shift! Make him *sweat!*"

And right then, in my officer's uniform in which I took so much pride, I went forth to dig clay. Barinov was overjoyed. He had foreseen my fall.

If I had better understood the secret, alert connection between all camp events, I could have guessed at my fate the day before. In the Novy Iyerusalim mess hall there was a separate serving window for the ITR's—the Engineering and Technical Workers —from which the engineers, bookkeepers, and . . . shoemakers received their meals. After my appointment as foreman of the clay pit, catching on to the camp grasp of things, I had approached this window and demanded my meal. The cooks dragged their feet about it, saying that I wasn't on the list of

ITR's, but nonetheless they did each time issue me my meal, and even without protesting after a while, so that I myself came to believe that I was on their list. As I thought it over later—I was, for the kitchen, still a question mark: hardly had I arrived than I acted big; I had borne myself proudly and gone about in military uniform. Such a person might very easily in a week become a senior work assigner or the senior camp bookkeeper or a doctor. (In camp everything is possible!!) And then they would be in my hands. So even though in actual fact the plant was only trying me out and had not included me on any list at all—the kitchen kept on feeding me just in case. But one day before my fall, when even the plant didn't know, the camp kitchen already knew all about it, and slammed the door in my mug: I had turned out to be a *cheap sucker*. This tiny episode typifies the atmosphere of the camp world.

This so prevalent human desire to be set apart by clothes discloses us in fact, particularly to the keen eyes of camp. It seems to us that we're clothing ourselves, but in fact we're baring ourselves, we are showing what we're worth. I did not understand that my military uniform had the same price as Matronina's red scarf. But there was an unslumbering eye which had spied it all out from a hiding place. And one day an orderly was sent to get me. A lieutenant wanted to see me—over here, in a separate room.

The young lieutenant conversed with me very pleasantly. In the cozy, clean room he and I were alone. The sun was shining just before sinking in the west and the wind was blowing the curtain. He told me to be seated. For some reason he asked me to write my autobiography—and he could not have made a more pleasant proposal. After the protocols of interrogation in which I had only spat on myself, after the humiliation of the Black Marias and the transit prisons, after the convoy and the prison jailers, after the thieves and the trusties, who had refused to see in me a former captain of our glorious Red Army, here I sat behind a desk and without being pushed by anyone at all, and beneath the benign glance of a friendly lieutenant, I wrote at just the right length in thick ink on excellent smooth paper which did not exist in camp that I had been a captain, that I had commanded a battery, that I had been awarded some decorations. And thanks to the actual writing, it seemed that I had regained my own personality, my own "I." (Yes, my gnoseological sub-

ject, "I"! And yet I was, after all, a university man, a civilian, in the army by chance. Imagine how embedded it must be in a career officer—this insistence on being held in esteem!) And the lieutenant, on reading my autobiography, was quite satisfied with it. "So you are a Soviet person, right?" Well, to be sure, well, of course, why not? How pleasant it was to rise again from the mud and ashes, and once again become a Soviet person! It was one-half of freedom.

The lieutenant asked me to come see him in five days. During these five days, however, I was forced to say good-bye to my military uniform because it was bad to be digging clay in it. I hid my field shirt and my military britches in my suitcase, and at the camp storage room I received some patched and faded rag which appeared to have been washed after lying for a year in a trash bin. This was an important step, though I did not as yet recognize its significance: my soul had not yet become that of a zek, but my skin therewith became a zek's. With shaven head, tormented by hunger, and squeezed by enemies, I would soon acquire the glance of a zek too—insincere, suspicious, all-observant.

This was how I looked when in five days' time I went to see the security chief, still not understanding what he was getting at. But the security chief was not there. He had stopped coming there entirely. (He already knew, but we did not, that in another week we would all be dispersed and that they would be bringing Germans to Novy Iyerusalim to replace us.) And that is how I missed seeing the lieutenant.

I discussed with Gammerov and Ingal why it was that I wrote my autobiography, and we did not guess, innocents, that these were already the first claws of the beast of prey reaching into our nest. And yet meanwhile the picture was so clear: Three young men had arrived in the new prisoner transport, and they kept discussing something all the time, arguing among themselves, and one of them—swarthy, round, and gloomy, with little mustaches, the one who had gotten himself a place in the bookkeeping office—didn't sleep nights and kept writing something on the bunks, writing and hiding it. Of course, one could send someone and grab what he was hiding—but without causing an alarm it was simpler to find out about it all from the one of them who wore army britches. He, evidently, was an army man and a Soviet person, and he would assist in the spiritual surveillance.

Zhora Ingal, who was not exhausted by his work during the day, really did refuse to sleep the first half-nights—and thus defended the freedom of the creative spirit. He sat up on the upper panel of the multiple bunk, without mattress, pillow, or blanket; in his padded jacket (it was not warm in the rooms, for the nights were autumn nights), in his shoes, his feet stretched out on the panel, his back leaning against the wall, and sucking on his pencil, looked sternly at his sheet of paper. (One could not have dreamed up worse behavior for camp! But neither he nor we understood yet how all that stood out like a sore thumb and how they kept watch over such things.)

Sometimes he simply gave in to his frailties and wrote an ordinary letter. His twenty-three-year-old wife had not even worn out the shoes in which she'd gone with him that winter to the conservatory—and now she had left him: security questionnaires, a blot on one's record, yes, and a person wants to live. He wrote to another woman, whom he called a dear sister, concealing from himself and from her that he also loved her or was ready to love her (but that woman, too, soon got married). He could write like this:

"My dear little sister! Harken to the wonderful intimations of humanity: Handel, Tchaikovsky, Debussy! I, too, wanted to become an intimation, but the clock of my life has come to a stop. . . ."

Or simply: "You have become much closer to me during the course of these months. It has become clear that there are very many real, genuine people in the world, and I very much hope that your husband will also be a real human being."

Or like this:

"I have wandered through life, stumbling and in search of myself. . . . There is a bright light in the room, and I have never seen darkness that is blacker. But only here have I found myself and my own fate, and this time not in books either. And do you know, my little bird, I have never been such an optimist as I am right now. Now I know once and for all that there is nothing more precious in life than the idea one serves. And I also now know how and what I must write—that's the main thing."[3]

3. No, he did not yet know *how* to write. According to the account of Arkady Belinkov, later on in another camp Ingal kept on writing like that, keeping to himself on the bunks. The prisoners first asked, and then subse-

And for the time being, he wrote at night and hid during the day a story about El Campesino—the Spanish Republican with whom he had shared a cell and whose peasant common sense had delighted him. El Campesino's fate was a simple one: after having lost the war to Franco he came to the Soviet Union, and after a while he was imprisoned here.[4]

Ingal was not a warm person. He did not inspire one to open one's heart to him at the first impulse. (I have just written this and stopped to think: Was I called a warm person either?) But his steadfastness was a worthy model. To write in camp! I might someday be able to rise to it if I didn't perish. But for the time being I was tormented by my own restless search, depressed by my first days as a clay digger. On a serene September evening Boris Gammerov and I could find time only to sit awhile on a pile of cinders at the approach to the camp perimeter.

In the direction of Moscow thirty-seven miles away the heavens flamed with salutes—this was the "holiday of victory over Japan." But the lanterns of our camp compound burned with a dull tired light. A hostile reddish light emanated from the plant windows. And in a long and drawn-out string, as mysterious as the years and the months of our prison terms, the lanterns on the poles of the broad brickyard compound receded into the distance.

Arms around his knees, thin and coughing, Gammerov repeated:

> For thirty years I have nurtured
> My love for my native land,
> And I shall neither expect
> . . . your leniency . . .*

Nor desire it.

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quently began to demand, that he show them *what* he was writing (denunciations, perhaps?). But regarding this only as one more act of violence against creative art—although from the opposite direction—he refused! And they . . . beat him up unmercifully.

I have quoted here these lines from his letters so that his grave may be marked with this tiny monument at least.

4. Ingal could never complete this short story about El Campesino because he never knew El Campesino's fate. El Campesino outlived his describer. I have heard that at the time of the great Ashkhabad earthquake he led a group of zeks out of a wrecked camp and shepherded them through the mountains into Iran. (Even the border guards had panicked.)

■

"They've brought the Fascists! They've brought the Fascists!" was a cry heard not only in Novy Iyerusalim. In the late summer and autumn of 1945, that's how it was on all the islands of the Archipelago. Our arrival—that of the *Fascists*—opened up the road to freedom for the nonpolitical offenders. They had learned of their amnesty back on July 7; since that time they had been photographed, and their release documents had been readied, and their accounts in the bookkeeping offices. But first for one month, then in places for two, and in some places for three months, the amnestied zeks had been languishing within the nauseating barbed-wire boundaries. There was no one to replace them!

There was *no one* to *replace* them!

And we, newborn blind innocents that we were, in our calked-up cells, had continued to hope all spring and summer for an amnesty! That Stalin would *take pity* on us! That he would "take account of the Victory"! . . . That, having passed us over in the first, the July, amnesty, he would subsequently declare a second amnesty, a special amnesty for political prisoners. (They used to report even one detail: this amnesty was already prepared; it was lying *on Stalin's desk*, and all that was left was for him to sign it; but he was off on vacation. The incorrigibles awaited a genuine amnesty, the incorrigibles believed! . . .) But if we had been pardoned, then who would have gone down into the mines? Who would have gone into the forests with saws? Who would have fired the bricks and laid them in walls? Stalin had managed to create a system under which—if it had manifested generosity or mercy—pestilence, famine, desolation, and ruin would have immediately embraced the entire country.

"They've brought the Fascists!" They had always hated us or at least disdained us, but now the nonpolitical offenders looked upon us almost with love because we had come to take their places. And those same prisoners who had learned, in German captivity, that there is no nation more despised, more abandoned, more alien and unneeded than the Russian, now learned, leaping down from red cattle cars and trucks onto the Russian earth, that even among this outcast people they were the most benighted and grievous of all.

Now that is what that great Stalinist amnesty turned out to be, one such as "the world had never seen." Where, indeed, had the world ever seen an amnesty which did not concern politicals?!?[5]

All those who had burglarized apartments, stolen the clothes off passers-by, raped girls, corrupted minors, given consumers short weight, played the hoodlum, disfigured the defenseless, been wantonly destructive in forests and waterways, committed bigamy, practiced blackmail or extortion, taken bribes, swindled, slandered, written false denunciations (but those particular people didn't actually even serve time at all—that's for the future!), peddled narcotics, pimped or forced women into prostitution, whose carelessness or ignorance had resulted in the loss of life, all went scot-free. (And I have merely listed here the articles of the Code covered by the amnesty; this is not a mere flourish of eloquence.)

And then they want morality from the people!

Half their terms were eliminated for: embezzlers, forgers of documents and ration cards, speculators, and thieves of state property. (Stalin still was touchy about the pockets of the state.)

But there was nothing so repugnant to the former front-line soldiers and POW's as the universal *blanket pardon of deserters* in wartime. Every man who, out of cowardice, ran away from his unit, left the front, did not show up at the conscription point, hid for many years in a pit in the vegetable garden of his mother's home, in cellars, behind the stove (always at the mother's! deserters, as a rule, did not trust their wives!), who for years had not pronounced one word aloud, who had turned into hunched-up hairy beasts—all of them, as long as they had been caught or had

5. It freed 58's who had sentences of up to *three* years, a sentence almost never given anyone, probably not as many as one-half of one percent of those to whom it applied. But even among that one-half percent of the cases, the implacable spirit of the amnesty proved stronger than its conciliatory wording. I knew one lad—his name, I believe, was Matyushin (he was an artist in the little camp at the Kaluga Gates)—who had been sentenced under 58-1b very early on, even before the end of 1941, for having been taken prisoner when it had not yet been decided how this was to be treated, or what term to give. They gave Matyushin just three years—an unbelievable happening! At the end of his term, he was of course not freed, but was told to await the Special Decree. But then came the amnesty! Matyushin began to ask (there was nowhere he could demand) for release. For almost five months—until December, 1945—the frightened officials of the Classification and Records Section turned him down. Finally he was released to go back home to Kursk Province. There was a rumor (and it's quite impossible to believe in any other outcome!) that soon afterward he was raked in and given something up to a whole *tenner*. It was impermissible to allow him to take advantage of the absent-mindedness of the first court!

turned themselves in by the day of the amnesty, were proclaimed now unsullied, unjudged, equal Soviet citizens! (And that is when the perspicacity of the old proverb was justified: Flight is not beautiful, but it is healthy!)

And those who trembled not, who did not play the coward, who, for their Motherland, took the enemy's blow and then paid for it with captivity—there could be no forgiveness for them: that's how the Supreme Commander in Chief saw it.

Was it that something in the deserters struck a chord in Stalin? Did he remember his own aversion to serving as a rank-and-file soldier, his own pitiful service as a recruit in the winter of 1917? Or did he simply conclude that cowards represented no danger to his rule and that only the bold were dangerous? After all, it might seem that it was not at all reasonable to amnesty deserters even from Stalin's point of view: he himself had shown his people the surest and simplest way to save one's skin in any future war.[6]

In another book I have told the story of Dr. Zubov and his wife: An old woman in their house hid a wandering deserter, who later on turned them in for it; for this the Zubovs, husband and wife, got sentences of a *tenner* each under Article 58. The court determined that their guilt lay not so much in hiding a deserter as in the *absence of any self-serving motive* for this concealment: he was not a relative of theirs, which meant that it amounted to anti-Soviet intent! Under the Stalinist amnesty the deserter himself was liberated, without having served even three years, and he had already forgotten about that little episode of his life. But things went differently with the Zubovs! They each served out a full ten years in camp (four in Special Camps), and another four years, without any sentence, in exile. They were released only because exile in general was done away with, nor were their convictions annulled either when they were released, not even after *sixteen* years, nor even *nineteen* years, after the events, and because of them they could not return to their home near Moscow, and were prevented from quietly living out their lives.[7]

6. And very likely there was also an historical justice here: an old debt was paid to deserting from the front, without which our whole history would have gone quite differently.

7. In 1958 the Chief Military Prosecutor replied to them: Your guilt was proven and there are no bases for reconsidering the case. Only in 1962, after twenty years, was their case under Section 58-10 (anti-Soviet intent) and 58-11 (an "organization" of husband and wife) quashed. Under Article 193-17-7g (aiding a deserter) it was determined that their sentence was five years, and

Now that's what the rancorous, vengeful, unreasonable Law fears and what it does not fear!

After the amnesty, they began to smear and smear with the paintbrushes of the Cultural and Educational Sections, and the internal archways and walls of the camps were decorated with mocking slogans: "For the broadest amnesty we shall respond to our dear Party and government with doubled productivity."

The ones amnestied were the habitual criminals and nonpolitical offenders, and the ones to respond with doubled work productivity were the politicals. . . . When in history has our government shone with a sense of humor?

With our "Fascist" arrival, daily releases began immediately in Novy Iyerusalim. Just the day before, you had seen women in the camp compound, looking disgraceful, dressed in tatters, using profanity—and lo! they had suddenly been transformed, gotten washed, smoothed down their hair, and put on dresses with polka dots and stripes which they'd got hold of heaven knows where, and, with jackets over their arms, they went modestly to the station. Seeing them on the train, would you ever guess that they knew how to swear like troopers?

And there, leaving the gates, were thieves and *half-breeds* (who imitate the real thieves). They didn't drop their impudent bearing even there; they clowned and minced and waved to those left behind and shouted, and their friends shouted back to them from the windows. The guards didn't interfere—the thieves are permitted everything. One thief, not without imagination, stood his suitcase on end, climbed up on top of it lightly, and, cocking his cap and tossing back the flaps of his jacket, *copped off* at a transit prison somewhere or won at cards, played a farewell serenade to the camp on his mandolin, singing some sort of thieves' twaddle. Horse laughs.

Those released still had a long walk on the path circling the camp and on through the field, and the folds of the barbed wire did not shut off from us the open view. That night those thieves would be strolling on the boulevards of Moscow, and perhaps even in their first week they would make their *jump* (clean out an apart-

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(! after twenty years!) the Stalinist amnesty was applied. And that's precisely the way in which the two old people whose lives had been smashed were notified in 1962: "As of July 7, 1945, *you are considered released* and your conviction annulled"!

ment), they'd take the clothes off your wife, or sister, or daughter on the night streets.

And as for you Fascists (and Matronina was also a Fascist!): Double your work productivity!

■

Because of the amnesty there was a shortage of manpower everywhere, and there were rearrangements. For a short time I was switched from the clay pit to a plant section. There I could take a look at Matronina's mechanization. Everyone had it bad here, but the most surprising of all was the work of one young girl—a real, genuine heroine of labor, though not suitable for the newspaper. Her place, her duty, in the shop had no name, but one could have called it the "upper distributor." Next to the conveyor belt emerging from the press with cut, wet bricks (just mixed from clay and very heavy) stood two girls, one of them the "lower distributor," and the other the "server-up." These did not have to bend down, but simply pivot, and not in a wide-angle turn either. But the "upper distributor," who stood on a pedestal like the queen of the shop, had incessantly to bend down, pick up a wet brick placed at her feet by the "server-up," and without crushing it raise it to the level of her waist or even shoulders, and, without changing the position of her feet, turn from the waist at a ninety-degree angle (sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left, depending on which receiving car was being loaded), and distribute the bricks on five wooden shelves, twelve on each. Her motion had no intermission, did not stop or change, and she moved at the speed of fast gymnastics—for the whole eight-hour shift, unless the press itself broke down. They kept handing and handing her half of all the bricks produced by the plant during a shift. Down below the girls switched duties, but she had no replacement for the entire eight hours. She ought to have grown dizzy from five minutes of such work, from those swings of her head and the bending and twisting of her torso. During the first half of her shift, however, the girl still kept her smile (she couldn't carry on a conversation because of the din of the press), and perhaps she liked being put up there on a pedestal like a beauty queen, where everyone could see her strong, bare legs below her hitched-up skirt and the ballet-like elasticity of her waist.

And for this work she got the highest ration in the camp: ten and a half extra ounces of bread (a total for the day of thirty ounces)—and for her dinner, besides the common black cabbage soup, *three Stakhanovite portions*—three pitiful portions of thin semolina cereal made with water. They gave her so little that she inhaled the full contents of the pottery bowl in one swallow.

"We work for money and you work for bread, no secret there," a grubby free mechanic who had come to fix the press said to me.

One-armed Punin from the Altai and I rolled away the loaded cars. These cars were like high towers—unsteady, because, thanks to ten shelves with twelve bricks each, their center of gravity was high up. Wobbling and tottering, like a bookcase overloaded with books, such a car had to be pulled by an iron handle along straight rails; then led up onto a supporting truck, halted there, and then this truck had to be pulled along another straight line past the drying chambers. Brought to a stop at the one required, the car then had to be taken off the truck and pushed ahead of one in still another direction into the drying chamber. Each chamber was a long, narrow corridor along whose walls stretched ten slots and ten shelf supports. One had to push the car right to the back, without letting it get out of line, and there release the lever, setting all ten shelves with the bricks on the ten supports, and release ten pairs of iron grips, and immediately roll the empty car back out. This whole scheme, it seems, was German, out of the nineteenth century (and the car had a German name), but the German scheme provided not only for rails to support the car but also for a floor laid beneath the pits to support the trucker. But for us the floor planks were rotten, broken, and I used to stumble and fall through. In addition, there was probably supposed to be ventilation in all the chambers, but there wasn't any, and while I struggled away at my mistakes in stacking (I often got things crooked, shelves got stuck, refused to set, and wet bricks tumbled down on my head), I gulped in carbon fumes and they burned my windpipe.

Therefore I was not very sorry to leave the plant when I was again driven out to the clay pit. There were not enough clay diggers—they were being released too. They sent Boris Gammerov to the clay pit too, and so we began to work together. The work norm there was well known: during one shift one worker was to dig, load up, and deliver to the windlass six cars full of clay—

eight cubic yards. For two persons the norm was sixteen. In dry weather the two of us together could manage six and a half. But an autumn drizzle began. For one day, two, three, without wind, it kept on, getting neither heavier nor stopping. It was not torrential, so no one was going to take the responsibility for halting the outdoor work. "It never rains on the canal" was a famous Gulag slogan. But in Novy Iyerusalim, for some reason, they did not even give us padded jackets, and there in the red clay pit beneath that monotonous drizzle we wallowed and smeared up our old front-line overcoats, which by the end of the third day had already absorbed a pail of water each. The camp also gave us no footwear, and we were rotting our last front-line boots in the wet clay.

The first day we still joked.

"And don't you find, Boris, that Baron Tuzenbakh would have envied us a good deal right now? After all, he dreamed of working in a brickyard. Do you remember? To work so hard that when he came home he would throw himself on his bed and instantly fall asleep. He evidently supposed that there would be a drier for wet clothes, that there would be a cot and a hot meal consisting of two courses."

But we rolled away a pair of cars, and angrily knocking our spades against the iron sides of the next car (the clay stuck to the shovels), this time I spoke with irritation:

"Just tell me, if you please, what devil made the sisters restless just sitting at home? No one forced them to go out on Sundays with young people to collect scrap. On Mondays no one required of them a précis of the Holy Scriptures. No one forced them to teach for nothing. No one drove them out into the blocks to put into effect universal education."

And after one more load:

"What empty, empty chatter they all indulged in: To work! To work! To work! Well, go ahead and work, the hell with you; who's stopping you? What a happy life it will be! So happy! So happy!! And what will it be like? You should have been accompanied by police dogs into that happy life. You'd have learned!"

Boris was weaker than I; he could hardly wield his spade, which the sticky clay made heavier and heavier, and he could hardly throw each shovelful up to the edge of the truck. Nonetheless, on the second day he tried to keep us up to the heights of

Vladimir Solovyev. He had outdistanced me there too! How much of Solovyev he had already read! And I had not read even one line because of my Bessel functions.

He told me whatever he remembered, and I kept trying to remember it, but I really couldn't; I didn't have the head for it at that moment.

No, how can one preserve one's life and at the same time arrive at the truth? And why is it necessary to be dropped into the depths of camp in order to understand one's own squalor?

He said: "Vladimir Solovyev taught that one must greet death with gladness. Worse than here . . . it won't be."

Quite true.

We loaded as much as we could. Penalty ration? So it would be a penalty ration! The hell with you! We wrote off the day and wound our way to camp. But there was nothing joyful awaiting us there: three times a day that same black, unsalted infusion of nettle leaves, and once a day a ladle of thin gruel, a third of a liter. And the bread had already been sliced—they gave fifteen and a quarter ounces in the morning, and not a crumb more during the day or in the evening. And then we were lined up for roll call out in the rain. And once again we slept on bare bunks in wet clothes, muddied with clay, and we shivered because they weren't heating the barracks.

And the next day that fine drizzle kept falling and falling. The clay pit had got drenched, and we were stuck in it but good. No matter how much clay you took on your spade, and no matter how much you banged it on the side of the truck, the clay would not drop off. And each time we had to reach over and push the clay off the spade into the car. And then we realized that we had been merely doing extra work. We put aside the spades and began simply to gather up the squelching clay from under our feet and toss it into the car.

Borya was coughing. There was still a fragment of German tank shell in his lungs. He was thin and yellow, and his nose, ears, and the bones of his face had grown deathly pointed. I looked at him closely, and I was not sure: would he make it through a winter in camp?

We still tried to divert our minds and conquer our situation—with thought. But by then neither philosophy nor literature was there. Even our hands became heavy, like spades, and hung down.

Boris suggested: "No, to talk . . . takes much strength. Let's be silent and think to some purpose. For example, compose verses. In our heads."

I shuddered. He could write verses here and now? The canopy of death hung over him; but the canopy of such a stubborn talent hung over his yellow forehead too.[8]

And so we kept silent and scooped up the clay with our hands. The rain kept coming. Yet they not only didn't take us out of the clay pit, but Matronina, brandishing the fiery sword of her gaze (her "red" head was covered with a dark shawl), pointed out to the brigadier from the edge the different ends of the clay pit. And we understood: they were not going to pull out the brigade at the end of its shift at 2 P.M., but would keep it in the clay pit until it fulfilled its norm. Only then would we get both lunch and dinner.

In Moscow the construction project was halted for lack of bricks.

But Matronina departed and the rain thickened. Light red puddles formed everywhere in the clay and in our car too. The tops of our boots turned red, and our coats were covered with red spots. Our hands had grown numb from the cold clay, and by this time they couldn't even throw anything into the car. And then we left this futile occupation, climbed up higher to the grass, sat down there, bent our heads, and pulled the collars of our coats up over the backs of our necks.

From the side we looked like two reddish stones in the field.

Somewhere young men of our age were studying at the Sorbonne or at Oxford, playing tennis during their ample hours of relaxation, arguing about the problems of the world in student cafés. They were already being published and were exhibiting their paintings. They were twisting and turning to find ways of distorting the insufficiently original world around them in some new way. They railed against the classics for exhausting all the subjects and themes. They railed at their own governments and their own reactionaries who did not want to comprehend and

8. That winter Boris Gammerov died in a hospital from exhaustion and tuberculosis. I revere in him a poet who was never even allowed to peep. His spiritual image was lofty, and his verses themselves seemed to me very powerful at the time. But I did not memorize even one of them, and I can find them nowhere now, so as to be able at least to make him a gravestone from those little stones.

adopt the advanced experience of the Soviet Union. They recorded interviews through the microphones of radio reporters, listening all the time to their own voices and coquettishly elucidating what they *wished to say* in their last or their first book. They judged everything in the world with self-assurance, but particularly the prosperity and higher justice of our country. Only at some point in their old age, in the course of compiling encyclopedias, would they notice with astonishment that they could not find any worthy Russian names for our letters—for all the letters of our alphabet.

The rain drummed on the back of our heads, and the chill crept up our wet backs.

We looked about us. The half-loaded cars had been overturned. Everyone had left. There was no one in the entire clay pit, nor in the entire field beyond the compound. Out in the gray curtain of rain lay the hidden village, and even the roosters had hidden in a dry place.

We, too, picked up our spades, so that no one would steal them —they were registered in our names. And dragging them behind us like heavy wheelbarrows, we went around Matronina's plant beneath the shed where empty galleries wound all around the Hoffmann kilns that fired the bricks. There were drafts here and it was cold, but it was also dry. We pushed ourselves down into the dust beneath the brick archway and sat there.

Not far away from us a big heap of coal was piled. Two zeks were digging into it, eagerly seeking something there. When they found it, they tried it in their teeth, then put it in their sack. Then they sat themselves down and each ate a similar black-gray lump.

"What are you eating there, fellows?"

"It's 'sea clay.' The doctor doesn't forbid it. It doesn't do any good, but it doesn't do any harm either. And if you add a kilo of it a day to your rations, it's as if you had really eaten. Go on, look for some; there's a lot of it among the coal."

And so it was that right up to nightfall the clay pit did not fulfill its work norm. Matronina gave orders that we should be left out all night. But . . . the electricity went out everywhere, and the work compound had no lights, so they called everyone in to the gatehouse. They ordered us to link arms, and with a beefed-up convoy, to the barking of the dogs and to curses, they took us to

the camp compound. Everything was black. We moved along without seeing where it was wet and where the earth was firm, kneading it all up in succession, losing our footing and jerking one another.

And in the camp compound it was dark. Only a hellish glow came from beneath the burners for "individual cooking." And in the mess hall two kerosene lamps burned next to the serving window. And you could not read the slogan, nor see the double portion of nettle gruel in the bowl, and you sucked it down with your lips by feel.

And tomorrow would be the same and every day: six cars of red clay—three scoops of black gruel. In prison, too, we seemed to have grown weak, but here it went much faster. There was already a ringing in the head. That pleasant weakness, in which it is easier to give in than to fight back, kept coming closer.

And in the barracks—total darkness. We lay there dressed in everything wet on everything bare, and it seemed it was warmer not to take anything off—like a poultice.

Open eyes looked at the black ceiling, at the black heavens.

Good Lord! Good Lord! Beneath the shells and the bombs I begged you to preserve my life. And now I beg you, please send me death.

Chapter 7

■

The Way of Life and Customs of the Natives

To describe the native life in all its outward monotony would seem to be both very easy and very readily attainable. Yet it is very difficult at the same time. As with every different way of life, one has to describe the round of living from one morning until the next, from one winter to the next, from birth (arrival in one's first camp) until death (death). And simultaneously describe everything about all the many islands and islets that exist.

No one is capable of encompassing all this, of course, and it would merely be a bore to read whole volumes.

And the life of the natives consists of work, work, work; of starvation, cold, and cunning. This work, for those who are unable to push others out of the way and set themselves up in a soft spot, is that selfsame *general work* which raises socialism up out of the earth, and drives us down into the earth.

One cannot enumerate nor cover all the different aspects of this work, nor wrap your tongue about them. To push a wheelbarrow. ("Oh, the machine of the OSO, two handles and one wheel, so!") To carry hand barrows. To unload bricks barehanded (the skin quickly wears off the fingers). To haul bricks on one's own body by "goat" (in a shoulder barrow). To break up stone and coal in quarry and mine, to dig clay and sand. To hack out eight cubic yards of gold-bearing ore with a pick and haul them to the screening apparatus. Yes, and just to dig in the

earth, just to "chew" up earth (flinty soil and in winter). To cut coal underground. And there are ores there too—lead and copper. Yes, and one can also . . . pulverize copper ore (a sweet taste in the mouth, and one waters at the nose). One can impregnate ties with creosote (and one's whole body at the same time too). One can carve out tunnels for railroads. And build roadbeds. One can dig peat in the bog, up to one's waist in the mud. One can smelt ores. One can cast metal. One can cut hay on hummocks in swampy meadows (sinking up to one's ankles in water). One can be a stableman or a drayman (yes, and steal oats from the horse's bag for one's own pot, but the horse is government-issue, the old grass-bag, and she'll last it out, most likely, but you can drop dead). Yes, and generally at the *"selkhozy"*—the Agricultural Camps—you can do every kind of peasant work (and there is no work better than that: you'll grab something from the ground for yourself).

But the father of all is our Russian forest with its genuinely golden tree trunks (gold is mined from them). And the oldest of all the kinds of work in the Archipelago is logging. It summons everyone to itself and has room for everyone, and it is not even out of bounds for cripples (they will send out a three-man gang of armless men to stamp down the foot-and-a-half snow). Snow comes up to your chest. You are a lumberjack. First you yourself stamp it down next to the tree trunk. You cut down the tree. Then, hardly able to make your way through the snow, you cut off all the branches (and you have to feel them out in the snow and get to them with your ax). Still dragging your way through the same loose snow, you have to carry off all the branches and make piles of them and burn them. (They smoke. They don't burn.) And now you have to saw up the wood to size and stack it. And the work norm for you and your brother for the day is six and a half cubic yards each, or thirteen cubic yards for two men working together. (In Burepolom the norm was nine cubic yards, but the thick pieces also had to be split into blocks.) By then your arms would not be capable of lifting an ax nor your feet of moving.

During the war years (on war rations), the camp inmates called three weeks at logging *"dry execution."*

You come to hate this forest, this beauty of the earth, whose praises have been sung in verse and prose. You come to walk

beneath the arches of pine and birch with a shudder of revulsion! For decades in the future, you only have to shut your eyes to see those same fir and aspen trunks which you have hauled on your back to the freight car, sinking into the snow and falling down and hanging on to them tight, afraid to let go lest you prove unable to lift them out of the snowy mash.

Work at hard labor in Tsarist Russia was limited for decades by the Normative Statutes of 1869, which were actually issued for free persons. In assigning work, the physical strength of the worker and the degree to which he was accustomed to it were taken into consideration. (Can one nowadays really believe this?) The workday was set at seven hours (!) in winter and at twelve and a half hours in summer. At the ferocious Akatui hard-labor center (Yakubovich, in the 1890's) the work norms were *easily fulfilled* by everyone except him. The summer workday there amounted to eight hours, including *walking to and from work.* And from October on it was seven hours, and in winter only six. (And this was even before any struggle for the universal eight-hour workday!) As for Dostoyevsky's hard labor in Omsk, it is clear that in general they simply loafed about, as any reader can establish. The work there was agreeable and went with a swing, and the prison administration there even dressed them up in *white* linen jackets and trousers! Now, how much further could they have gone? In our camps they used to say: "You could even put on a white collar"—which meant things were very, very easy and there was absolutely nothing to do. And they had . . . even white jackets! After work the hard-labor convicts of the "House of the Dead" used to spend a long time *strolling* around the prison courtyard. That means that they were *not* totally fagged out! Indeed, the Tsarist censor did not want to pass the manuscript of *The House of the Dead* for fear that the *easiness* of the life depicted by Dostoyevsky would fail to deter people from crime. And so Dostoyevsky added new pages for the censor which demonstrated that life in hard labor was *nonetheless* hard![1] In our camps only the trusties went strolling around on Sundays, yes, and even they hesitated to. And Shalamov remarks with respect to the *Notes of Mariya Volkonskaya* that the Decembrist prisoners in Ner-

1. Letter of I. A. Gruzdev to Gorky. Gorky Archives, Vol. XI, Moscow, 1966, p. 157.

chinsk had a norm of 118 pounds of ore to mine and load each day. (One hundred and eighteen pounds! One could lift that all at once!) Whereas Shalamov on the Kolyma had a work norm per day of 28,800 pounds. And Shalamov writes that in addition their summer workday was sometimes sixteen hours long! I don't know how it was with sixteen, but for many it was thirteen hours long—on earth-moving work in Karlag and at the northern logging operations—and these were hours on the job itself, over and above the three miles' walk to the forest and three back. And anyway, why should we argue about the length of the day? After all, the *work norm* was senior in rank to the length of the workday, and when the brigade didn't fulfill the norm, the only thing that was changed at the end of the shift was the convoy, and the work sloggers were left in the woods by the light of searchlights until midnight—so that they got back to the camp just before morning in time to eat their dinner along with their breakfast and go out into the woods again.[2]

There is no one to tell about it either. They all died.

And then here's another way they raised the norms and proved it was possible to fulfill them: In cold lower than 60 degrees below zero, workdays were written off; in other words, on such days the records showed that the workers had not gone out to work; but they chased them out anyway, and whatever they squeezed out of them on those days was added to the other days, thereby raising the percentages. (And the servile Medical Section wrote off those who froze to death on such cold days on some other basis. And the ones who were left who could no longer walk and were straining every sinew to crawl along on all fours on the way back to camp, the convoy simply shot, so that they wouldn't escape before they could come back to get them.)

And how did they feed them in return? They poured water into a pot, and the best one might expect was that they would drop unscrubbed small potatoes into it, but otherwise black cabbage, beet tops, all kinds of trash. Or else vetch or bran, they didn't

2. Those who increase work norms in industry can still deceive themselves into thinking that such are the successes of the technology of production. But those who increase the norms of *physical labor* are executioners *par excellence!* They cannot seriously believe that under socialism the human being is twice as big and twice as muscular. They are the ones . . . who should be tried! They are the ones who should be sent out to fulfill those work norms!

begrudge these. (And wherever there was a water shortage, as there was at the Samarka Camp near Karaganda, only one bowl of gruel was cooked a day, and they also gave out a ration of two cups of turbid salty water.) Everything any good was always and without fail stolen for the chiefs (see Chapter 9), for the trusties, and for the thieves—the cooks were all terrorized, and it was only by submissiveness that they kept their jobs. Certain amounts of fat and meat "subproducts" (in other words, not real food) were signed out from the warehouses, as were fish, peas, and cereals. But not much of that ever found its way into the mouth of the pot. And in remote places the chiefs even took all the *salt* for themselves for their own pickling. (In 1940, on the Kotlas-Vorkuta Railroad, both the bread and the gruel were unsalted.) The worse the food, the more of it they gave the zeks. They used to give them horse meat from exhausted horses driven to death at work, and, even though it was quite impossible to chew it, it was a feast. Ivan Dobryak recalls today: "In my own time I have pushed no small amount of dolphin meat into my mouth, also walrus, seal, sea bear, and all kinds of other sea animal trash. [I interrupt: we ate whale meat in Moscow, at the Kaluga Gates.] I was not even afraid of animal feces. And as for willow herbs, lichens, wild camomile—they were the very best of dishes." (This means he himself *went out and added to* his rations.)

It was impossible to try to keep nourished on Gulag norms anyone who worked out in the bitter cold for thirteen or even ten hours. And it was completely impossible once the basic ration had been plundered. And this was where Frenkel's satanic mixing paddle was put into the boiling pot: some sloggers would be fed at the expense of others. The *pots* were divvied up; if less than 30 percent of the norm (and in each different camp this was calculated in a different way) was fulfilled, the ration issued you was a punishment block ration: 10½ ounces of bread and a bowl of gruel a day; for from 30 to 80 percent of norm they issued a penalty ration of 14 ounces of bread a day and two bowls of gruel; for from 81 to 100 percent you got a work ration of from 17½ to 21 ounces of bread and three bowls of gruel; and after that came the shock workers' pots, and they differed among themselves, running from 24½ to 31½ ounces of bread a day and supplementary kasha portions—two portions—and the *bonus*

dish, which was some kind of dark, bitterish, rye-dough fingers stuffed with peas.

And for all this watery food which could not possibly cover what the body expended, the muscles burned up at body-rending toil, the shock workers and Stakhanovites went into the ground sooner than did the malingerers. This was something the old camp veterans understood very well, and it was covered by their own saying: *Better not to give me an extra kasha—and not to wake me up for work!* If such a happy stroke of fortune befalls you . . . as to be allowed to stay on your bunk for lack of clothing, you'll get the "guaranteed" twenty-one ounces. If they have dressed you up *for the season* (and this is a famous Gulag expression!) and taken you out to work on the canal—even if you wear your sledge hammer down to a chisel, you'll never get more than ten and a half ounces out of the frozen soil.

But the zek was not at liberty to stay on his bunk.

Of course, they did not feed the zeks so badly everywhere and always, but these are typical figures for Kraslag in wartime. At Vorkuta in that same period the miner's ration was in all likelihood the highest in all of Gulag (because heroic Moscow was being heated with that coal): it was 45½ ounces for 80 percent of norm underground or 100 percent on the surface. And in that most horribly murderous Tsarist hard-labor Akatui on a *nonworking* day (spent "on the bunk") they used to give out 2½ Russian pounds of bread (35 ounces) as well as 32 zolotniks (in other words, 4.65 ounces) of meat. And on a working day there they gave out 3 Russian pounds (43 ounces) of bread and 48 zolotniks (7 ounces) of meat. Was that not maybe higher than the front-line ration in the Red Army? And the Akatui prisoners carted off their gruel and their kasha by the tubful to the jailers' pigs. And P. Yakubovich found their thin porridge made from buckwheat kasha (! Gulag never ever saw that!) "inexpressibly repulsive to the taste." Danger of death from malnutrition is something else that never hung over the hard-labor convicts of Dostoyevsky's book. And what can you say if geese went wandering around (!!) in their prison yard ("in the camp compound") and the prisoners didn't wring their necks?[3] The bread at Tsarist

3. On the basis of the standards of many harsh camps Shalamov justly reproached me: "And what kind of a hospital *cat* was it that was walking around where you were? Why hadn't they killed it and eaten it long before?

Akatui was set out on their tables *unrestricted*, and at Christmas they were given a *pound* of beef and unlimited butter for their cereal. On Sakhalin the Tsarist prisoners working on roads and in mines during the months of the most work received each day 56 ounces of bread, 14 ounces of meat, 8¾ ounces of cereal! And the conscientious Chekhov investigated whether these norms were really enough, or whether, in view of the inferior quality of the baking and cooking, they fell short. And if he had looked into the bowl of our Soviet slogger, he would have given up the ghost right then and there.

What imagination at the beginning of our century could have pictured that "after thirty or forty years," not just on Sakhalin alone, but throughout the entire Archipelago, prisoners would be glad to get even more soggy, dirty, slack-baked bread, with admixtures of the devil only knew what—and that 24½ ounces of it would be an enviable *shock-worker* ration?

No, even more! That throughout all Russia the collective farmers would even envy that prisoners' ration! "We don't get even that, after all!"

Even at the Tsar's Nerchinsk mines they gave a supplementary "gold prospectors' " payment for everything over the government norm (which was always moderate). In our camps, for most of the years of the Archipelago, they either paid nothing for labor or just as much as was required for soap and tooth powder. Only in those rare camps and in those short periods when for some reason they introduced *cost accounting* (and only from one-eighth to one-fourth of the genuine wage was credited to the prisoner) could the zeks buy bread, meat, and sugar. And all of a sudden—oh, astonishment!—a crust would be left on the mess hall table, and it might be there for all of five minutes without anyone reaching out a hand to grab it.

And how were our natives dressed and shod?

All archipelagoes are like all archipelagoes: the blue ocean rolls about them, coconut palms grow on them, and the administration of the islands does not assume the expense of clothing the

And why does Ivan Denisovich in your story carry a *spoon* with him, even though it is well known that everything cooked in camp can easily be drunk down as a liquid by *tipping up the bowl*?"

natives—they go about barefoot and almost naked. But as for our cursed Archipelago, it would have been quite impossible to picture it beneath the hot sun; it was eternally covered with snow and the blizzards eternally raged over it. And in addition to everything else it was necessary to clothe and to shoe all that horde of ten to fifteen million prisoners.[4]

Fortunately, born outside the bounds of the Archipelago, the zeks arrived here not altogether naked. They wore what they came in—more accurately, what the *socially friendly* elements might leave of it—except that as a brand of the Archipelago, a piece had to be torn off, just as they clip one ear of the ram; greatcoats have their flaps cut off diagonally, Budenny helmets have the high peak cut off so as to leave a draft through the top. But alas, the clothing of free men is not eternal, and footgear can be in shreds in a week from the stumps and hummocks of the Archipelago. And therefore it is necessary to clothe the natives, even though they have nothing with which to pay for the clothing.

Someday the Russian stage will yet see this sight! And the Russian cinema screen! The pea jackets one color and their sleeves another. Or so many patches on the pea jacket that its original cloth is totally invisible. Or a *flaming* pea jacket—with tatters on it like tongues of flame. Or patches on britches made from the wrappings of someone's food parcel from home, and for a long while to come one can still read the address written in the corner with an indelible pencil.[5]

And on their feet the tried and true Russian "lapti"—bast sandals—except that they had no decent "onuchi"—footcloths—to go with them. Or else they might have a piece of old automobile tire, tied right on the bare foot with a wire, an electric cord. (Grief has its own inventiveness. . . .) Or else there were "felt boots"—"burki"—put together from pieces of old, torn-up padded jackets, with soles made of a layer of thick felt and a layer of rubber.[6] In the morning at the gatehouse, hearing complaints about the

4. According to the estimates of the encyclopedia *Rossiya-SSSR*, there were up to fifteen million prisoners at a time. This figure agrees with the estimate made by prisoners inside the U.S.S.R., as we ourselves have added it up. Whenever they publish more proven figures, we will accept them.

5. In Tsarist Akatui the prisoners were given fur overcoats.

6. Neither Dostoyevsky, nor Chekhov, nor Yakubovich tells us what the prisoners of their own Tsarist times wore on their feet. But of course they were doubtless shod, otherwise they would have written about it.

cold, the chief of the camp would reply with his Gulag sense of humor:

"My goose out there goes around barefoot all winter long and doesn't complain, although it's true her feet are red. And all of you have got rubber overshoes."

And then, in addition, bronze-gray camp faces will appear on the screen. Eyes oozing with tears, red eyelids. White cracked lips, covered with sores. Skewbald, unshaven bristles on the faces. In winter . . . a summer cap with earflaps sewn on.

I recognize you! It is you, the inhabitants of my Archipelago!

But no matter how many hours there are in the working day—sooner or later sloggers will return to the barracks.

Their barracks? Sometimes it is a dugout, dug into the ground. And in the North more often . . . *a tent*—true, with earth banked and reinforced hit or miss with boards. Often there are kerosene lamps in place of electricity, but sometimes there are the ancient Russian "splinter lamps" or else cotton-wool wicks. (In Ust-Vym for two years they saw no kerosene, and even in headquarters barracks they got light from oil from the food store.) It is by this pitiful light that we will survey this ruined world.

Sleeping shelves in two stories, sleeping shelves in three stories, or, as a sign of luxury, "vagonki"—multiple bunks—the boards most often bare and nothing at all on them; on some of the work parties they steal so thoroughly (and then sell the spoils through the free employees) that nothing government-issue is given out and no one keeps anything of his own in the barracks; they take both their mess tins and their mugs to work with them (and even tote the bags containing their belongings—and thus laden they dig in the earth); those who have them put their blankets around their necks (a film scene!), or else lug their things to trusty friends in a guarded barracks. During the day the barracks are as empty as if uninhabited. At night they might turn over their wet work clothes to be dried in the drier (if there is a drier!)—but undressed like that you are going to freeze on the bare boards! And so they dry their clothes on themselves. At night their caps may freeze to the wall of the tent—or, in a woman's case, her hair. They even hide their bast sandals under their heads so they won't be stolen off their feet. (Burepolom during the war.) In the middle of the barracks there is an oil drum with holes in it which has been converted into a stove, and it is good when it

gets red-hot—then the steamy odor of drying footcloths permeates the entire barracks—but it sometimes happens that the wet firewood in it doesn't burn. Some of the barracks are so infested with insects that even four days' fumigation with burning sulphur doesn't help and when in the summer the zeks go out to sleep on the ground in the camp compound the bedbugs crawl after them and find them even there. And the zeks boil the lice off their underwear in their mess tins after dining from them.

All this became possible only in the twentieth century, and comparison here with the prison chroniclers of the past century is to no avail; they didn't write of anything like this.

It is necessary to add to all this the picture of the way the brigade's bread is brought on a tray from the bread-cutting room into the mess hall under guard of the huskiest brigade members carrying staves—otherwise other prisoners will grab it, tear it apart, and run off with it. And the picture should also be added of the way food parcels from home are knocked out of the zeks' hands at the very moment they leave the parcel office. And also the constant alarm whether the camp administration is going to take away the rest day (and why talk about the war if for a whole year before the war they had not had one day off on the "Ukhta State Farm," and no one in Karlag could remember any rest days from 1937 right through 1945?). Then on top of everything one has to add the eternal impermanence of camp life, the fear of change: rumors about a prisoner transport; the prisoner transport itself (the hard labor of Dostoyevsky's time knew no prisoner transports, and for ten or even twenty years people served out their term in one prison, and that was a totally different kind of life); then some sort of dark and sudden shuffling of "contingents"—either a transfer "in the interests of production," or a "*commissioning*" by a medical review board, or inventory of property, or sudden night searches that involve undressing and the tearing apart of all the prisoners' meager rags—and then beyond that the thorough individual searches before the big holidays of May 1 and November 7 (the Christmas and Easter of hard labor in the past century knew nothing like this). And three times a month there were the fatal, ruinous baths. (To avoid repetition, I will not write about them here; there is a detailed story-investigation in Shalamov, and a story by Dombrovsky.)

And later there was that constant, clinging (and, for an intellectual, torturing) *lack of privacy*, the condition of not being an

individual but a member of a brigade instead, and the necessity of acting for whole days and whole years not as you yourself have decided but as the brigade requires.

And one must remember as well that everything that has been said refers to the established camp in operation for some time. But that camp had to be *started* at some time and by someone (and by whom if not by our unhappy brother zeks, of course?): they came to a cold, snowy woods, they stretched wire on the trees, and whoever managed to survive until the first barracks knew those barracks would be for the guard anyway. In November, 1941, near the station of Reshoty, Camp No. 1 of Kraslag was opened (over a ten-year period they increased to seventeen). They drove 250 soldiers there, removed from the army to strengthen it morally. They cut timber, they built log frames, but there was nothing to cover the roofs with, and so they lived with iron stoves beneath the sky. The bread brought them was frozen, and they chopped it up with an ax, and gave it out in handfuls—broken up, crushed up, crumby. Their other food was heavily salted humpback salmon. It burned their mouths, and they eased the burning with snow.

(When you remember the heroes of the War of the Fatherland, do not forget these!)

Now that is the way of life of my Archipelago.

Philosophers, psychologists, medical men, and writers could have observed in our camps, as nowhere else, in detail and on a large scale the special process of the narrowing of the intellectual and spiritual horizons of a human being, the reduction of the human being to an animal and the process of dying alive. But the psychologists who got into our camps were for the most part not up to observing; they themselves had fallen into that very same stream that was dissolving the personality into feces and ash.

Just as nothing that contains life can exist without getting rid of its wastes, so the Archipelago could not keep swirling about without precipitating to the bottom its principal form of waste—the *last-leggers.* And everything built by the Archipelago had been squeezed out of the muscles of the last-leggers (before they became last-leggers). And those who survived, who reproach *the*

7. See Chapter 22.

last-leggers with being themselves to blame, must take upon themselves the disgrace of their own preserved lives.

And among the surviving, the orthodox Communists now write me lofty protests: How base are the thoughts and feelings of the heroes of your story *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich!* Where are their anguished cogitations about the course of history? Everything is about bread rations and gruel, and yet there are sufferings much more unbearable than hunger.

Oh—so there are! Oh—so there are indeed much more unbearable sufferings (the sufferings of orthodox thought)? You in your medical sections and your storerooms, you never knew hunger there, orthodox loyalist gentlemen!

It has been known for centuries that Hunger . . . rules the world! (And all your Progressive Doctrine is, incidentally, built on Hunger, on the thesis that hungry people will inevitably revolt against the well-fed.) Hunger rules every hungry human being, unless he has himself consciously decided to die. Hunger, which forces an honest person to reach out and steal ("When the belly rumbles, conscience flees"). Hunger, which compels the most unselfish person to look with envy into someone else's bowl, and to try painfully to estimate what weight of ration his neighbor is receiving. Hunger, which darkens the brain and refuses to allow it to be distracted by anything else at all, or to think about anything else at all, or to speak about anything else at all except food, food, and food. Hunger, from which it is impossible to escape even in dreams—dreams are about food, and insomnia is over food. And soon—just insomnia. Hunger, after which one cannot even eat up; the man has by then turned into a one-way pipe and everything emerges from him in exactly the same state in which it was swallowed.

And this, too, the Russian cinema screen must see: how the last-leggers, jealously watching their competitors out of the corners of their eyes, stand duty at the kitchen porch waiting for them to bring out the slops in the dishwater. How they throw themselves on it, and fight with one another, seeking a fish head, a bone, vegetable parings. And how one last-legger dies, killed in that scrimmage. And how immediately afterward they wash off this waste and boil it and eat it. (And inquisitive cameramen can continue with their shooting and show us how, in 1947 in Dolinka, Bessarabian peasant women who had been brought in from *freedom* hurled themselves with that very same intent on

slops which the last-leggers had *already checked over.*) The screen will show bags of bones which are still joined together lying under blankets at the hospital, dying almost without movement—and then being carried out. And on the whole . . . how simply a human being dies: he was speaking—and he fell silent; he was walking along the road—and he fell down. "Shudder and it's over." How (in camp at Unzha and Nuksha) the fat-faced, socially friendly work assigner jerks a zek by the legs to get him out to line-up—and he turns out to be dead, and the corpse falls on its head on the floor. "Croaked, the scum!" And he gaily gives him a kick for good measure. (At those camps during the war there was no doctor's aide, not even an orderly, and as a result there were no sick, and anyone who pretended to be sick was taken out to the woods in his comrades' arms, and they also took a board and rope along so they could drag the corpse back the more easily. At work they laid the sick person down next to the bonfire, and it was to the interest of both the zeks and the convoy to have him die the sooner.)

What the screen cannot catch will be described to us in slow, meticulous prose, which will distinguish between the nuances of the various paths to death, which are sometimes called scurvy, sometimes pellagra, sometimes alimentary dystrophy. For instance, if there is blood on your bread after you have taken a bite —that is scurvy. From then on your teeth begin to fall out, your gums rot, ulcers appear on your legs, your flesh will begin to fall off in whole chunks, and you will begin to smell like a corpse. Your bloated legs collapse. They refuse to take such cases into the hospital, and they crawl on all fours around the camp compound. But if your face grows dark and your skin begins to peel and your entire organism is racked by diarrhea, this is pellagra. It is necessary to halt the diarrhea somehow—so they take three spoons of chalk a day, and they say that in this case if you can get and eat a lot of herring the food will begin to hold. But where are you going to get herring? The man grows weaker, weaker, and the bigger he is, the faster it goes. He has already become so weak that he cannot climb to the top bunks, he cannot step across a log in his path; he has to lift his leg with his two hands or else crawl on all fours. The diarrhea takes out of a man both strength and all interest—in other people, in life, in himself. He grows deaf and stupid, and he loses all capacity to weep, even when he is being dragged along the ground behind a sledge. He is no longer

afraid of death; he is wrapped in a submissive, rosy glow. He has crossed all boundaries and has forgotten the name of his wife, of his children, and finally his own name too. Sometimes the entire body of a man dying of starvation is covered with blue-black pimples like peas, with pus-filled heads smaller than a pinhead—his face, arms, legs, his trunk, even his scrotum. It is so painful he cannot be touched. The tiny boils come to a head and burst and a thick wormlike string of pus is forced out of them. The man is rotting alive.

If black astonished head lice are crawling on the face of your neighbor on the bunks, it is a sure sign of death.

Fie! What naturalism. Why keep talking about all that?

And that is what they usually say today, those who did not themselves suffer, who were themselves the executioners, or who have washed their hands of it, or who put on an innocent expression: Why remember all that? Why rake over old wounds? (*Their* wounds!!)

Lev Tolstoi had an answer for that—to Biryukov: "What do you mean, why remember? If I have had a terrible illness, and I have succeeded in recovering from it and been cleansed of it, I will always remember gladly. The only time I will refuse to remember is when I am still ill and have got worse, and when I wish to deceive myself. If we remember the old and look it straight in the face, then our new and present violence will also disclose itself."[8]

I want to conclude these pages about last-leggers with N.K.G.'s story about the engineer Lev Nikolayevich Y. (! indeed, this must, in view of the first name and patronymic, be in honor of Tolstoi!)—a last-legger theoretician who found the last-legger's pattern of existence to be the most convenient method of preserving his life.

Here is how the engineer Y. occupies himself in a remote corner of the camp compound on a hot Sunday: Something with a resemblance to a human being sits in a declivity above a pit in which brown peaty water has collected. Set out around the pit are sardine heads, fish bones, pieces of gristle, crusts of bread, lumps of cooked cereal, wet washed potato peelings, and something in addition which it is difficult even to name. A tiny bonfire has been built on a piece of tin, and above it hangs a soot-black-

8. Biryukov, *Razgovory s Tolstym* (*Conversations with Tolstoi*), Vol. 3–4, p. 48.

ened soldier's mess tin containing a broth. It seems to be ready! The last-legger begins to dip out the dark slops from the mess tin with a wooden spoon and to wash down with them one after another the potato peelings, the gristle, then the sardine heads. He keeps chewing away very, very slowly and deliberately (it's the common misfortune of last-leggers to gulp things down hastily without chewing). His nose can hardly be seen in the midst of the dark gray wool that covers his neck, his chin, his cheeks. His nose and his forehead are a waxy brown color and in places the skin is peeling. His eyes are teary and blink frequently.

Noticing the approach of an outsider, the last-legger quickly gathers up everything set out there which he has not yet eaten, presses his mess tin to his chest, falls to the ground, and curls up in a ball like a hedgehog. And now he can be beaten, shoved—but he is firmly on the ground, he won't stir, and he won't give up his mess tin.

N.K.G. speaks to him in a friendly voice—and the hedgehog uncurls a bit. He sees his visitor does not intend to beat him or take away his mess tin. A conversation ensues. They are both engineers (N.G. a geologist, and Y. a chemist), and now Y. discloses to G. his own faith. Basing himself on his still-remembered formulas for the chemical composition of substances, he demonstrates that one can get everything nutritionally necessary from refuse; one merely has to overcome one's squeamishness and direct all one's efforts to extracting nourishment from this source.

Notwithstanding the heat, Y. is dressed in several layers of clothes, all dirty. (And he had a basis for this too: Y. had established experimentally that lice and fleas will not multiply in *extremely* dirty clothing, as though they themselves were squeamish. Therefore he had even picked out for one of his undergarments a piece of wiping in the repair shop.)

Here was how he looked: He wore a Budenny helmet with a black candle stump in place of the spiked peak; the helmet was covered with scorch marks. In some places hay and in some places oakum adhered to the greasy elephant ears of the helmet. From his outer clothing torn pieces and tatters stuck out like tongues on his back and sides. Patches and patches. A layer of tar on one side. The cotton-wool lining was hanging out in a fringe along the hem. Both outer sleeves were torn to the elbows, and when the last-legger raised his arms—he looked like a bat

shaking its wings. And on his feet were boatlike rubber overshoes glued together from red automobile tires.

Why was he dressed so warmly? In the first place, the summer was short and the winter long, and it was necessary to keep everything he had for the winter, and where else could he keep it except on himself? In the second place, the principal reason, he created by this means a soft and well-padded exterior, and thus did not feel pain when he was struck. He could be kicked and beaten with sticks without getting bruised. This was his one defense. All he had to do was be quick enough to see who was about to strike him, drop to the ground in time, pull his knees up to his stomach, thus covering it, press his head down to his chest and embrace it with his thickly padded arms. Then the only places they could hit him were padded. And so that no one should beat him for too long at a time—it was necessary quickly to give the person beating him a feeling of triumph. And to this end Y. had learned to howl hideously, like a piglet, from the very first blow, even though he wasn't hurting in the least. (For in camp they are very fond of beating up the weak—not only the work assigners and the brigadiers, but the ordinary zeks as well—so as not to feel completely weak themselves. And what was to be done if people simply could not believe in their own strength unless they subjected others to cruelty?)

And to Y. this seemed a fully endurable and reasonably chosen way of life—and one, in addition, which did not require him to soil his conscience! He did nobody harm!

He hoped to survive his term.

The interview with the last-legger is over.

■

In our glorious Fatherland, which was capable *for more than a hundred years* of not publishing the work of Chaadayev because of his reactionary views, you see, you are not likely to surprise anyone with the fact that the most important and boldest books are never read by contemporaries, never exercise an influence on popular thought in good time. And thus it is that I am writing this book solely from a sense of obligation—because too many stories and recollections have accumulated in my hands and I

cannot allow them to perish. I do not expect to see it in print anywhere with my own eyes; and I have little hope that those who managed to drag their bones out of the Archipelago will ever read it; and I do not at all believe that it will explain the truth of our history in time for anything to be corrected. In the very heat of working on this book I was struck by the greatest shock of my life: The dragon emerged for one minute, licked up my novel with his wicked rough red tongue, and several other old works*—and retired behind the curtain for the time. But I can hear his breathing, and I know that his teeth are aimed at my neck, that it is just that my time is not up yet. And with devastated soul I am going to gather my strength to complete this investigation, so that it at least may escape the dragon's teeth. In the days when Sholokhov, who has long since ceased to be a writer, journeyed from this country of harried and arrested writers to receive a Nobel prize, I was trying to duck the dicks, seeking a hiding place and trying to win time for my clandestine, panting pen to complete this very book.

I have digressed, but what I wanted to say was that in our country the best books remain unknown to their contemporaries, and it is very possible that I am therefore vainly repeating the secret work of someone else, when, had I known of it, I could have made my own work shorter. But during the seven years of our frail and pale freedom some things did nevertheless emerge, despite everything, and one swimmer in the dawn-lit ocean has spied another head and cried out in a wheezy voice to him. And it was in this way that I learned of Shalamov's sixty camp stories and of his study of the thieves.

I want to declare here that, apart from several individual points on which we disagree, no difference of interpretation has ever arisen between us in explaining the Archipelago. He and I evaluate the whole native life in the same way. Shalamov's camp experience was more bitter and longer than mine, and I acknowledge with esteem that it fell to him rather than to me to plumb those depths of beastliness and despair to which the whole camp way of life was dragging us all down.

This, however, does not prohibit my raising objections to specific points on which we disagree. One such point is the evaluation of the camp Medical Section. Shalamov speaks with hate and gall (and rightly too!) of every camp establishment, but he always makes a biased exception solely for the Medical Section. He sup-

ports, if he does not create, a legend about the benign camp Medical Section. He affirms that everything in the camp was against the camp inmate except the doctor—he alone could help him.

That he *can* help still doesn't mean that he does. He *can* help, if he so desires, just as the construction superintendent, the norm setter, the bookkeeper, the storeroom clerk, the cook, the orderly, and the work assigner can too—but do many of them actually help?

Perhaps up to 1932, when the camp Medical Sections were still subordinate to the People's Commissariat of Health, the doctors could still be doctors. But in 1932 the Medical Sections were turned over in toto to Gulag—and it became their goal to help the oppressors and to be gravediggers. So, leaving aside the good cases with good doctors—just who would have kept those Medical Sections in the Archipelago at all if they had not served the common purpose?

When the commandant and the brigadier beat up on a last-legger because he refused to go out to work—so badly that he was left licking his wounds like a dog and lay unconscious for two days in a punishment cell (Babich), and for two months afterward could not even crawl down from the bunks—was it not the Medical Section (at Camp No. 1 of the Dzhida group of camps) that refused to draw up official certification of the beating and subsequently to treat him?

And who was it if not the Medical Section that signed every decree for imprisonment in the punishment block? (Incidentally, let us not lose sight of the fact that the chiefs did not have all that great a need for that doctor's signature. In the camp near the Indigirka, S. A. Chebotaryov was a free "*plasterer*" [a medical assistant—this term being, not by chance, a piece of camp slang too]. He did not sign a single one of the camp chief's decrees for imprisonment in the punishment block, since he considered that even a dog shouldn't be put in such a punishment block, let alone people; the stove only warmed the jailer out in the corridor. That was all right; incarcerations took place there without his signature.)

When, through the fault of the construction superintendent or the foreman, or because of the absence of fencing or safety precautions, a zek died at work, who was it if not the medical assistant and the Medical Section that signed the certificate attesting

that he had died of a heart attack? (And what that meant was that everything could be left just as it was and tomorrow others would die. Otherwise, the medical assistant would soon be working at the mine face himself! And the doctor too!)

When quarterly *commissioning* took place—that comedy of general medical examination of the camp population with assignment to categories: TFT (Heavy Physical Labor), SFT (Average Physical Labor), LFT (Light Physical Labor), and IFT (Individual Physical Labor)—were there many good doctors who opposed the evil chief of the Medical Section, who was kept in his job only because he supplied columns for heavy labor?

Or perhaps the Medical Section was at least merciful to those willing to sacrifice a part of their own bodies in order to save the rest? Everyone knows the law, not just in one camp or another: Self-mutilators, self-maimers, and *self-incapacitators* were *refused* all medical help! This was an administration order, but who actually *refused* the help? The doctors . . . Let's say you've blown off four of your fingers with a dynamite cap, and you've come to the infirmary—they give you no bandage: Drop dead, dog! And back at the Moscow-Volga Canal during the wave of universal competition, for some reason (?) too many cases of self-maiming suddenly appeared. And there was an immediate explanation: this was a sally of the class enemy. And was one then to treat them? (Of course, much depended here on the cleverness of the zek who had maimed himself: it was possible to do it in such a way that it could not be proved. And Bernshtein scalded his hand adroitly with boiling water poured through a cloth—and thus saved his life. Another might adroitly freeze his hand by not wearing a mitten or else urinate in his felt boots and go out into the bitter cold. But you couldn't take everything into account: gangrene could set in and death would follow. Sometimes there were cases of unforeseen self-incapacitation: Babich's unhealing scurvy ulcers were diagnosed as syphilis and there was nowhere to make a blood test; he thereupon cheerfully lied that he and his entire family had syphilis. He was moved into the venereal-disease zone of the camp and by this means he postponed his death.)

Was there ever a time when the Medical Section excused from work all the prisoners genuinely ill on a given day? Or when it didn't drive a given number of seriously ill people out of the camp compound to work? Dr. Suleimanov refused to put Pyotr

Kishkin, the hero and comedian of the zek people, into the hospital because his diarrhea did not satisfy the norm: every half-hour, and it had to be bleeding. So when the column formed up to go to the work site, Kishkin *sat down*, running the risk of getting shot. But the convoy turned out to be more merciful than the doctor: they stopped a passing car and sent Kishkin to the hospital. People will object that the Medical Section was held to a strictly limited percentage of Group "C"—inpatients and ambulatory cases.[9] So there was an explanation in every case, but in every case there also remained a cruelty in no wise outweighed by the consideration that "on the other hand" they were doing good to "someone else."

And then we have to bring in here the horrible camp hospitals, like the one at Camp No. 2 of Krivoshchekovo: a small reception room, a toilet, and a hospital room. The toilet stank and filled the hospital air, but was that the worst of it? In each hospital cot lay *two* diarrhea patients, and others were lying on the floor between cots. Those who had grown weak evacuated in their cots. There were no linens or medicines (1948–1949). The hospital was run by a third-year medical student (a 58 himself). He was desperate, but there was nothing he could do. The hospital orderlies who were supposed to feed the patients were strong, fat young fellows. They ate the patients' food, stealing from their hospital ration. Who had put them in their cushy spots? The *godfather*, no doubt. The student didn't have the strength to get rid of them or defend the patients' rations. But would any doctor have had it either?[10]

Or could it possibly be contended that the Medical Section in every camp was able to insist on really human nutrition? Well, at least to the extent of not having those "night-blind brigades"

9. Doctors got around that as best they could. In Sym Camp they organized a semihospital; the last-leggers lay there on their pea jackets and went out to shovel snow, but were fed from the hospital rations. The free chief of the Medical Department, A. M. Statnikov, got around the Group "C" quota in the following way: he cut back on the hospitals in the working compounds but in turn expanded the hospital camps, i.e., camps entirely for the sick. In the official Gulag documents they sometimes even wrote: "Raise the *physical fitness* of the zeks"—but they refused to give any funds for this purpose. In fact, the very complexity of these subterfuges of honest physicians proves that the Medical Sections were not allowed to interfere with the death process.

10. Dostoyevsky entered the hospital without any hindrance. And the Medical Section in his prison was the same for both prisoners and convoy. What immaturity!

returning from work in the evenings in a line of the night-blind, clinging to one another? No. If by some miracle some intervention did secure an improvement in nutrition, it would only have been the work administration, so as to have strong sloggers. And certainly never the Medical Section.

No one is blaming the physicians for all this (though their courage to resist was often weak because they were afraid of being sent to general work), but the legends about the saviors from the Medical Sections aren't needed either. Like every branch of the camp administration, the Medical Section, too, was born of the devil and filled with the devil's blood.

Continuing his thought, Shalamov says that the prisoner in camp could count only on the Medical Section and that he could not count on the work of his own hands, that he did not dare: this led to the grave. "In camp it is not the small ration that kills but the big one."

The saying is true: The big ration is the one that kills. In one season of hauling timber the strongest slogger would end up a hopeless last-legger himself. At that point he would be certified a temporary invalid: fourteen ounces of bread and gruel from the bottom-ranking "pot." During the winter, a number of such people died (well, say 725 out of 800). The rest of them went onto "light physical" work and died on that.

So what other way out can we offer Ivan Denisovich if they are unwilling to take him on as a medical assistant or a hospital attendant, and also won't fake him a release from work for even one day? If he is too short on schooling and too long on conscience—to get himself fixed up with a job as trusty in the camp compound? Is there any other course left him than to put his trust in his own two hands? What about the Rest Point (the OP)? What about maiming himself? And what about early release on medical grounds—"aktirovka"?

Let Ivan Denisovich talk about them in his own words. For he has given them plenty of thought. He had the time.

"The Rest Point—the OP—that's like a camp rest home. Tens of years the zeks bend their backs, don't get vacations, so they have Rest Points—for two weeks. They feed much better there and they're not driven outside the camp compound to work, and

in the compound they only put in three, four hours of real easy work: pounding rocks to pave roads, cleaning up the compound, or making repairs. And if there were half a thousand people in the camp—they'd open a Rest Point for fifteen. And then if everything had been divided up honestly, everyone would have gotten Rest Point once in just over a year. But just as there was no justice in anything in camp, there was especially none with Rest Points. They would open up a Rest Point sneakily, the way a dog snaps, and right off there would be lists ready for three whole shifts there. Then they would shut it down quick as a wink too—it wouldn't last half a year. The types who pushed in would be the bookkeepers, barbers, shoemakers, tailors—the whole aristocracy, with just a few real sloggers thrown in for the look of the thing—the best workers, they said. And then the tailor Beremblyum would shove under your nose, 'I made a fur coat for somebody outside and a thousand rubles was paid the camp cashier for it, and you, idiot, haul beams a whole month and the camp doesn't even get a hundred rubles for you, so who's the best worker? Who should get Rest Point?' And so there you go around, your heart bleeding, trying to figure how to get into Rest Point just to catch your breath a little bit, and before you look around it has already been shut down, and that's the end of it. And the sorest point of all is that at least they could enter in your prison file that you had been at a Rest Point in such and such a year—it wasn't that they didn't have enough bookkeepers in camp. No, they wouldn't. Because it was no good to them. The next year they'd open up a Rest Point again—and again Beremblyum would be in the first shift, and again you'd be bypassed. In the course of ten years they'd roll you sideways through ten camps and in the tenth you'd beg them just to let you poke your nose in the OP to see what it was like, whether the walls were painted decently and so on, because after all you'd never been in one your whole term—but how could you prove it?

"No, no point in getting worked up about the Rest Points.

"But maiming yourself was another matter. To cripple yourself but still stay alive and become an invalid. As they say: one minute's endurance—and a year of loafing. Break your leg, and then stop the bone from knitting right. Drink salt water and swell up. And smoke tea—spoil your heart. Or drink stewed tobacco —good for wrecking the lungs. But you had to be careful not to

overdo, hurting yourself so badly that you leapfrogged invalidism into the grave. And who knew just how far to go?

"In many ways, an invalid didn't have things too bad: he might be able to get himself a spot in the cookhouse, or the bast-sandal shop. But the main thing smart people were looking for in making themselves invalids was early release on health grounds—'aktirovka.' Except that 'aktirovka,' especially in waves, was even harder than getting into Rest Points. They got together a commission, inspected the invalids, and for the very worst of them wrote up an 'act'—a certificate: from such and such a date, because of state of health, so-and-so is classified as unsuited to serve out his term further, and we petition for his release.

"We only *petition!* And while this certificate proceeded upward to the higher-ups and then back down again you could cash in your chips. That happened often. After all, the higher-ups were sly bastards. They released ahead of time on health grounds those who were going to kick the bucket in a month anyway.[11] And also the ones who could pay well. There was a confederate of Kalikman who had got away with half a million—she paid a hundred thousand—and went free. Not like us fools.

"There used to be a book* going around the barracks, and the students read it aloud in their corner. In it there was one fellow who got himself a million and didn't know what to do with his million under Soviet power—there wasn't supposed to be anything to buy, and you could die of starvation with it, with that million. We used to laugh: Tell that bull to someone else. As for us, we've seen quite a few of those millionaires walk out of camp too. You can't buy God's health back for a million, but you can buy freedom, and buy power, and buy people too, lock, stock, and barrel. And there are oh, oh, oh, so many of those who have piled up millions out in freedom too; only they just don't shout it from the housetops or wave their arms about when they have it.

"But for the 58's early release for health is a closed door. During all the time the camps have existed, they say that maybe three times, for a month apiece, prisoners sentenced under Section 10 were released early for health, and then that door, too,

11. In O. Volkov's story "Grandfathers," those old men released for bad health were driven out of camp, but they had nowhere to go, and hung on right in the vicinity to die—without the bread ration and shelter they had in camp.

was slammed shut. And no one will take money from them, from the enemies of the people. If you did, you'd be putting your own head on the block in place of theirs. Yes, and they don't have any money, those 'politicians.' "

"What do you mean, Ivan Denisych, *they* don't have any?"

"Well, all right, we don't have any. . . ."

■

But there is one form of *early release* that no bluecap can take away from the prisoner. This release is—death.

And this is the most basic, the steadiest form of Archipelago output there is—with no norms.

From the fall of 1938 to February, 1939, at one of the Ust-Vym camps, 385 out of 550 prisoners died. Certain work brigades (Ogurtsov) died off totally, including the brigadiers. In the autumn of 1941, Pechorlag (the railroad camp) had a listed population of fifty thousand prisoners, and in the spring of 1942, ten thousand. *During this period not one prisoner transport was sent out of Pechorlag anywhere*—so *where* did the *forty thousand* prisoners go? I have written *thousand* here in italics—why? Because I learned these figures accidentally from a zek who had access to them. But you would not be able to get them for all camps in all periods nor to total them up. In the central sector of Burepolom Camp, in the barracks housing the last-leggers, in February, 1943, out of fifty people there were never fewer than four deaths a night, and one night there were twelve. In the morning their places were taken by new last-leggers who dreamed of recuperating on a diet of thin *magara** gruel and fourteen ounces of bread.

Corpses withered from pellagra (no buttocks, and women with no breasts), or rotting from scurvy, were checked out in the morgue cabin and sometimes in the open air. This was seldom like an autopsy—a long vertical cut from neck to crotch, breaking leg bones, pulling the skull apart at its seam. Mostly it was not a surgeon but a convoy guard who *verified* the corpse —to be certain the zek was really dead and not pretending. And for this they ran the corpse through with a bayonet or smashed the skull with a big mallet. And right there they tied to the big toe of the corpse's right foot a tag with his prison file number, under which he was identified in the prison lists.

At one time they used to bury them in their underwear but later on in the very worst, lowest-grade, which was dirty gray. And then came an across-the-board regulation not to waste any underwear on them at all (it could still be used for the living) but to bury them naked.

At one time in Old Russia it was thought that a corpse could not get along without a coffin. Even the lowliest serfs, beggars, and tramps were buried in coffins. Even the Sakhalin and the Akatui hard-labor prisoners were buried in coffins. But in the Archipelago this would have amounted to the unproductive expenditure of millions on labor and lumber. When at Inta after the war one honored foreman of the woodworking plant was actually buried in a coffin, the Cultural and Educational Section was instructed to make propaganda: Work well *and you, too, will be buried in a wooden coffin.*

The corpses were hauled away on sledges or on carts, depending on the time of year. Sometimes, for convenience, they used one box for six corpses, and if there were no boxes, then they tied the hands and legs with cord so they didn't flop about. After this they piled them up like logs and covered them with bast matting. If there was ammonal available, a special brigade of gravediggers would dynamite pits for them. Otherwise they had to dig the graves, always common graves, in the ground: either big ones for a large number or shallow ones for four at a time. (In the springtime, a stink used to waft into the camp from the shallower graves, and they would then send last-leggers to deepen them.)

On the other hand, no one can accuse us of gas chambers.

Where there was more time to spare on such things—as, for example, in Kengir—they would set out little posts on the hillocks, and a representative of the Records and Classification Section, no less, would personally inscribe on them the inventory numbers of those buried there. However, in Kengir someone also did some wrecking: Mothers and wives who came there were shown the cemetery and they went there to mourn and weep. Thereupon the chief of Steplag, Comrade Colonel Chechev, ordered the bulldozers to bulldoze down the little grave posts and level off the hillocks—because of this lack of gratitude.

Now that, fair reader, is how your father, your husband, your brother, was buried.

And that is how the path of the native and his way of life . . . come to an end.

But as a matter of fact it was Pavel Bykov who said: "Until twenty-four hours have passed after death, don't be so sure that it's all over."

■

"Well, Ivan Denisovich, what is there left that we haven't yet recounted? From the routine of our daily lives?"

"Whooo! You haven't even begun. It would take as many years as you served to tell it all. Like about the zek who broke formation to chase a cigarette butt and the convoy guard shot him.[12] How the invalid zeks in the kitchen gulped down raw potatoes: once cooked they'd not get any. How tea was used in place of money in camps. How they used to *brew up a superstrong tea mix*—1¾ ounces to a glass—and get a high. But that was mostly the thieves. They used to buy tea from the free employees with stolen money.

"And how did a zek manage to live on the whole? If he couldn't manage to weave string from sand—if he wasn't both tight-fisted and ingenious—he couldn't survive. Even in his sleep the zek had to keep thinking how to dodge and twist his way through the next day. And if you got your hands on something, or sniffed out some loophole—then keep your mouth shut! Keep it shut, or else the guys next to you would find out—and mess it all up. That's how it is in camp: there just isn't enough for everyone anyway, so see to it there's enough for you.

"Well that's as may be, but still—even in camp you have the old human custom of making friends. Not only old friendships—codefendants or comrades from out in freedom—but new ones made here. People's hearts went out to each other and they confided in each other. Buddies! Whatever we have we—share, and whatever we don't—fifty-fifty. It's true that we keep our precious bread ration separate, but everything gotten hold of otherwise is cooked in one mess tin and ladled from the same one.[13]

12. In Dostoyevsky's time a prisoner could leave formation to beg alms. And in formation the prisoners used to chat and sing.

13. For some reason, in the hard-labor regime described by Dostoyevsky friendship did not flourish and no one paired off even to eat.

"There were buddies who stayed together a short time and others who stayed together a long time. Some pairings were based . . . on conscience and others . . . on deceit. Like a snake, the 'godfather' used to like to crawl in between such friendships. Over a common mess tin and in a whisper you'd talk about everything.

"The old zeks admit and the former POW's will tell you too: The one who sells you down the river is the one who ate from the mess tin with you.

"And that's also a partial truth.

"But the best deal is not to have a buddy but a girl buddy. A camp wife, a zechka.* As they used to say, to get *submarried.* What was good if you were young was to ——— her somewhere in a one-night shack-up, and that would do your soul good. And even for an old, weak guy it was still good. You could get something anyway, earn a favor, maybe she would do your washing for you, bring it to your barracks, put your shirt under your pillow, and no one would laugh—it was *in the law.* She would cook for you too, you would sit down on your cot next to each other and eat. And that kind of camp espousal would suit even an old chap particularly well, just barely warm with a little touch of bitter flavor. You'd look at her through the steam from the mess pot—and there were wrinkles on her face, yes, and on your own too. You were both in gray camp rags, your padded jackets were all stained with rust and clay and lime and alabaster and lubricating grease. You never knew her before, and you had never set foot on her native soil, and she didn't talk like one of 'ours' either. And out in freedom her children were growing up, and yours too. And she had left a husband there too—who was skirt-chasing. And your own wife had been left alone too, and she wasn't letting the grass grow under her feet either: after all, eight years, ten years, everyone wants to live. And this, your camp wife, drags the same chain as you do and doesn't complain.

"And we live—not like people. And we die—not like parents.

"Some zeks got visits from their real wives. In various camps under various chiefs they were allowed to sit together for twenty minutes in the gatehouse. And there were even cases where they spent a night or two together in a separate shack. If you were a 150 percenter. But these visits were nothing more than poison. Why touch her with your hands and talk with her about

something if you still had years and years to go before living with her again? It split the men in two. With a camp wife everything is clearer: Between us we have one cup of grits left; they say we're going to get burnt sugar this coming week. It won't be white, of course, the rats . . . Lathe operator Rodichev's wife came to visit him, and just before she arrived his shack-up bit him on the neck while making love. Rodichev swore a blue streak because his wife was coming, and off he went to the Medical Section to get a bandage put on his bruise: I can say I caught cold.

"And what kind of women were there in camp? There were women thieves and there were loose women and there were politicals, but most of all there were lowly and humble women sent there under the decree. They were all sent up under the decree for theft of state property. During and after the war, who crowded all the factories full? Women and girls. And who had to feed the family? They. And what were they to feed the family with? Need knows no law. And so they would pilfer: they used to put sour cream in their pockets, sneak out rolls between their legs, wind stockings around their waists, and the likeliest way was to go to work barefoot and grab new stockings there at work, put them on and wash them at home and take them to the open market to sell. Whoever produced something would swipe that. They would stick a spool of thread between their breasts. All the watchmen had been bribed, for they had to live too, and they only picked off a few, hit or miss. And then the guard would jump in and there would be a body search—and it was ten years for that shitty spool! The same as for treason! And thousands got caught with those spools.

"Everyone was on the take to the extent that her work permitted it. Nastya Gurkina had it good—she used to work in the baggage cars. And she reasoned things out quite correctly: Our own Soviet people are persistent bastards and they'll jump at your throat just for a lousy towel. Therefore she never touched Soviet suitcases and cleaned out only foreigners'. The foreigner, she said, wouldn't even think to check up on his things in time, and by the time he found out about it, he wouldn't bother to write a complaint, and all he would do was spit out: "Russian thieves!" And he would go back to his own country.

"Shitarev, an old bookkeeper, used to reproach Nastya: 'You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you're just a piece of meat!

'Why didn't you think about the honor of Russia?' And she would tell him off: 'Up yours, and stand still for it too! Why didn't *you* worry about Victory? You used to let all those gentlemen officers go home to play stud dog.' (Shitarev had been a hospital bookkeeper during the war, and the officers used to grease his palm so that he would extend their period of sick leave by forging their travel documents, and they could go home before returning to the front. This was very serious. Shitarev had been sentenced to be shot, and only later was his sentence commuted to a 'tenner.')

"Of course, there were all kinds of unfortunates serving time as well. One woman got a 'fiver' for fraud: her husband had died in the middle of the month and she went on collecting his bread rations till the end of the month without turning the card in, using it for herself and for her two children. Her neighbors informed on her out of jealousy. She served four years too—and one year was knocked off by the amnesty.

"And this could happen too: A house was bombed out, the wife and children were killed and the husband was left. All the ration cards were burned, but the husband was out of his mind and lived through the whole thirteen days until the end of the month without bread rations and did not ask for a ration card for himself. Therefore they suspected that all his ration cards were intact. They gave him three years. And he served one and a half of the three."

Now just a minute there, just a minute, Ivan Denisych, that's all for another time. And so you are telling us about a girl buddy, right? About "submarriage"? She drags the same chain you do —and doesn't complain?

Chapter 8

■

Women in Camp

And how could one not think of them, even back during interrogation? After all, they were somewhere here in neighboring cells! In this very same prison, under this very same regimen, enduring this unbearable interrogation—and how could they bear it, such weak beings?

The corridors were soundless, and you could not distinguish their walk or the rustle of their dresses. But one day, one of the Butyrki jailers was fussing with a lock, and left our men's cell to stand half a minute at the windows in the well-lit upper corridor, and, peering underneath the "muzzle" of a corridor window, we suddenly saw down below, in the little green garden on a corner of asphalt, standing in line in pairs like us—and also waiting for a door to be opened—women's shoes and ankles! All we could see were just ankles and shoes, but on high heels! And it was like a Wagnerian blast from *Tristan and Isolde.* We could see no higher than that and the jailer was already driving us into the cell, and once inside we raved there, illumined and at the same time beclouded, and we pictured all the rest to ourselves, imagining them as heavenly beings dying of despondency. What were they like? What were they like!

But it seems that things were no harder for them and maybe even easier. I have so far found nothing in women's recollections of interrogation which could lead me to conclude that they were any more disheartened than we were or that they became any more deeply depressed. The gynecologist N. I. Zubov, who served ten years himself and who in camp was constantly engaged

in treating and observing women, says, to be sure, that statistically women react more swiftly and more sharply to arrest than men and to its principal effect—the loss of the family. The woman arrested is spiritually wounded and this expresses itself most often in the cessation of the vulnerable female functions.

But what particularly surprised me in the women's recollections of interrogation was what "trifles" from a prisoner's point of view (but not at all from a woman's) they could be thinking about there. Nadya Surovtseva, pretty and still young, hastily pulled on stockings that didn't match to go to her interrogation, and there in the interrogator's office she was embarrassed because the interrogator kept looking at her legs. You would think she should be saying: The hell with him! Horseradish on his snoot! It wasn't as if she were going to the theater with him, and besides she was almost a doctor of philosophy—in the Western sense—and a fervid political partisan—so who would have thought it! And Aleksandra Ostretsova, imprisoned in the Big Lubyanka in 1943, told me later on in camp that they used to kid around in there: they would hide under the table and the scared jailer would come in to look for the one who was missing; or they would paint themselves red with beet juice and go out like that for their walk. Or already summoned to interrogation, she would have an animated discussion with her cellmates whether she should dress simply that day or put on her evening dress. True, Ostretsova was at that time a spoiled, naughty young girl and was imprisoned with young Mira Uborevich. But another prisoner, N. I. P——va, older and a scientist, used to sharpen her aluminum spoon in her cell. And why do you think—to cut her throat? No, to cut off her braids (and she did cut them off)!

Subsequently, in the yard at Krasnaya Presnya I happened to be next to a prisoner transport of women who like us had been recently sentenced. And with astonishment I saw that they were not so thin, not so emaciated and pale as we were. Equal prison rations for all and equal prison torments turn out on the average to be easier for women. They do not weaken so quickly from hunger.

But of course for all of us, and for women in particular, prison was just the flower. The berries came later—camp. And it was precisely in camp that the women would either be broken or else, by bending and degenerating, adapt themselves.

In camp it was the opposite—everything was harder for the women than for us men. Beginning with the camp filth. Having already suffered from the dirt in the transit prisons and on the prisoner transports themselves, the woman would then find no cleanliness in camp either. In the average camp, in the women's work brigades, and also, it goes without saying, in the common barracks, it was almost never possible for her to feel really clean, to get warm water (and sometimes there was no water at all: in winter at Krivoshchekovo Camp No. 1 it was impossible to wash anywhere in the whole place. The only water was frozen and there was nowhere to thaw it). There was no lawful way a woman could lay hands on either cheesecloth or rags. No place there, of course, to do laundry!

A bath? Well! The initial arrival in camp began with a bath—if one doesn't take into account the unloading of the zeks from the cattle car onto the snow, and the march across with one's things on one's back surrounded by convoy and dogs. In the camp bath the naked women were examined like merchandise. Whether there was water in the bath or not, the inspection for lice, the shaving of armpits and pubic hair, gave the barbers, by no means the lowest-ranking aristocrats in the camp, the opportunity to look over the new women. And immediately after that they would be inspected by the other trusties. This was a tradition going right back to the Solovetsky Islands. Except that there, at the dawn of the Archipelago, a shyness still existed, not typical of the natives—and they were inspected clothed, during auxiliary work. But the Archipelago hardened, and the procedure became more brazen. Fedot S. and his wife (it was their fate to be united!) now recollect with amusement how the male trusties stood on either side of a narrow corridor and passed the newly arrived women through the corridor naked, not all at once, but one at a time. And then the trusties decided among themselves who got whom. (According to the statistics of the twenties there was one woman serving time for every six or seven men.[1] After the decrees of the thirties and forties the proportion of women to men rose substantially—but still not sufficiently for women not to be valued, particularly the attractive ones.) In certain camps a polite procedure was preserved: The women were conducted to

1. Vyshinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

their barracks—and then the well-fed, self-confident, and impudent trusties entered the barracks, dressed in new padded jackets (any clothing in camp which was not in tatters and soiled seemed mad foppery). Slowly and deliberately they strolled between the bunks and made their choices. They sat down and chatted. They invited their choices to "visit" them. And they were living, too, not in a common-barracks situation, but in cabins occupied by several men. And there they had hot plates and frying pans. And they had fried potatoes too! An unbelievable dream! The first time, the chosen women were simply feasted and given the chance to make comparisons and to discover the whole spectrum of camp life. Impatient trusties demanded "payment" right after the potatoes, while those more restrained escorted their dates home and explained the future. You'd better make your arrangements, make your arrangements, inside *the camp compound*, darling, while it is being proposed in a gentlemanly way. There's cleanliness here, and laundry facilities, and decent clothes and unfatiguing work—and it's all yours.

And in this sense it is considered to have been "easier" for women in camp. It was "easier" for women to preserve life itself. And with that "sexual hatred" with which certain of the last-leggers looked on those women in camp who had not descended to pickings from the slops, it was natural to reason that it was easier for women in camp, since they could get along on a lesser ration, and had a way to avoid starvation and remain alive. For the man crazed by hunger the entire world is overshadowed by the wings of hunger, and nothing else in the world is of any importance.

And it is true there are women who by their own nature, out in freedom too, by and large, get together with men easily, without being choosy. Such women, of course, always had open to them easy ways out. Personal characteristics do not get distributed simply on the basis of the *articles* of the Criminal Code, yet we are not likely to be in error if we say that the majority of women among the 58's were not of this kind. For some of them, from the beginning to the end, this step was less bearable than death. Others would bridle, hesitate, be embarrassed (and they were held back by shame before their girl friends too), and when they had finally decided, when they had reconciled themselves—it might be too late, they might not find a camp taker any longer.

Because not every one was lucky enough *to get propositioned.* Thus many of them gave in during the first few days. The future looked too cruel—and there was no hope at all. And this choice was made by those who were almost little girls, along with solidly married women and mothers of families. And it was the little girls in particular, stifled by the crudity of camp life, who quickly became the most reckless of all.

What if you said . . . no? All right, that's your lookout! Put on britches and pea jacket. And go marching off to the woods, with your formless, fat exterior, and your frail inner being. You'll come crawling yet. You'll go down on bended knees.

If you have arrived in camp in good physical shape, and if you have made a *wise* decision at the very beginning—then you are all set for a long stay, in the Medical Section, in the kitchen, in the bookkeeping office, in the sewing shop or in the laundry, and the years will flow past comfortably enough, quite like out in freedom. And if a prisoner transport comes your way, you will arrive in your new place, too, in full flower, and you will already know how to act there from the very start. One of the most successful moves you can make . . . is to become a servant to one of the chiefs. When I.N. arrived in camp on a new prisoner transport, she was a portly, well-preserved woman, who for many years had been the prosperous wife of a high army commander. The chief of the Records and Classification Section immediately spotted her and gave her the post of honor of washing floors in the chief's office. And that is how she began serving out her term in a soft spot, fully aware that this was a piece of luck.

And what of it if you loved someone out in freedom and wanted to remain true to him? What profit is there in the fidelity of a female corpse? "*When you get back to freedom—who is going to need you?*" Those were the words which kept ringing eternally through the women's barracks. You grow coarse and old and your last years as a woman are cheerless and empty. Isn't it smarter to hurry up and grab something too, even from this savage life?

And it was all made easier by the fact that no one here condemned anyone else. "Everyone lives like that here."

And hands were also untied by the fact that there was no meaning, no purpose, left in life.

Those who did not give in right off . . . either changed their

minds or else were compelled to anyway. And even the most stubborn of all, if she was good-looking, would give in, give in and go to bed under duress: give in!

In our minicamp at the Kaluga Gates in Moscow there was a proud wench, M., a former lieutenant and a sniper. She was like a princess in a fairy tale: crimson lips, the bearing of a swan, jet-black locks.[2] And the fat, dirty old stock clerk, Isaak Bershader, decided to buy her. He was nauseating in appearance —and to her, in view of her own resilient beauty, her own recent heroic life, he was particularly repulsive. He was a rotten snag and she was a tall beautiful poplar. But he besieged her so persistently and hard she could hardly breathe. He not only condemned her to general work. (All the trusties acted in concert and helped him in his entrapment.) She was subjected to harassment by the jailers. (He also had the jailers on his *hook*.) And he even threatened her with an assuredly bad prisoner transport to far away. And one evening, when the lights had gone out in the camp, I myself saw how, in a twilight pale because of snow and sky, M. went like a shadow from the women's barracks and knocked with bent head at this greedy Bershader's storeroom. After that she was well taken care of inside the camp compound.

M.N., who was already middle-aged, and a draftsman out in freedom, the mother of two children, who had lost her husband in prison, had already gone far along the path of a last-legger in the women's logging brigade—and still kept on being stubborn, and was close to the point of no return. Her legs swelled up. She stumbled back from work at the tail end of the column, and the convoy would drive her along with blows of their gunstocks. One day she somehow stayed behind in the compound. The cook *played up to her*: Come on over to my cabin. I will feed you a bellyful. She went. He put a big frying pan of fried potatoes and pork in front of her. She ate it all up. But after she had paid for it she threw up—and the potatoes were all lost. The cook swore at her: "Just think! What a princess!" And from then on she got used to it gradually. She got in a better position. And later, sitting at a camp film showing, she would pick out a man for the night.

And anyone who went on waiting longer . . . would have to drag herself to the men's common barracks on her own—not

2. In my play* I portrayed her under the name Granya Zybina, but there I endowed her with a better fate than the one she actually had.

to the trusties by this time—and walk down the aisles between the bunks repeating monotonously, "Half a kilo, half a kilo." And if a rescuer would go with her for a bread ration, then she would curtain off her bunk with sheets on three sides and in this tent, this shack (hence "shack-up"), earn her bread. If the jailer didn't catch her first.

A multiple bunk curtained off with rags from the neighboring women was a classic camp scene. But things could be a great deal simpler than that too. This again refers to the Krivoshchekovo Camp No. 1, 1947–1949. (We know of this No. 1, but how many were there?) At this camp there were thieves, nonpolitical offenders, juveniles, invalids, women and nursing mothers, all mixed up together. There was just one women's barracks—but it held five hundred people. It was indescribably filthy, incomparably filthy and rundown, and there was an oppressive smell in it and the bunks were without bedding. There was an official prohibition against men entering it, but this prohibition was ignored and no one enforced it. Not only men went there, but juveniles too, boys from twelve to thirteen, who flocked in to learn. First they began with simple observation of what was going on; there was no false modesty there, whether because there were no rags or perhaps not enough time; at any rate *the bunks were not curtained off*. And, of course, the light was never doused either. Everything took place very naturally as in nature in full view, and in several places at once. Obvious old age and obvious ugliness were the only defenses for a woman there—nothing else. Attractiveness was a curse. Such a woman had a constant stream of visitors on her bunk and was constantly surrounded. They propositioned her and threatened her with beatings and knives—and she had no hope of being able to stand up against it but only to be smart about whom she gave in to—to pick the kind of man to defend her with his name and his knife from all the rest, from the next in line, from the whole greedy queue, from those crazy juveniles gone berserk, aroused by everything they could see and breathe in there. And it wasn't only men that she had to be defended against either. Nor only the juveniles who were aroused. What about the women next to them, who day after day had to see all that but were not themselves invited by the men? In the end those women, too, would explode in an uncontrollable rage and hurl themselves on their successful neighbors and beat them up.

And then, too, venereal diseases were nearly epidemic at

Krivoshchekovo. There was a rumor that nearly half the women were infected, but there was no way out, and on and on both the sovereigns and the suppliants kept crossing the same threshold. And only those who were very foresighted, like the accordionist K., who had his own connections in the Medical Section, could each time check the secret list of the venereal-disease patients for himself and his friends in order not to get caught.

And what about the women in the Kolyma? After all, women were extremely rare there and in desperate demand. It was better for a woman not to get caught on the work sites there—by a convoy guard, a free employee, or a prisoner. The Kolyma was where the expression *streetcar* for a gang rape arose. K.O. tells how a truck driver lost at cards a whole truckload of women, including K.O. herself, being transported to Elgen. And, turning off the road, he delivered them for the night to a gang of unconvoyed construction workers.

And what about the *work?* In any mixed brigade there was some kind of indulgence for a woman, some kind of work which was a bit easier. But if the entire brigade consisted of women—then there was no mercy shown, then they demanded *the same cubic yards!* And there were camps populated entirely by women, and in such camps the women were lumberjacks, and ditch-diggers, and adobe bricklayers. And it was only to the copper and tungsten mines that women were not assigned. Take Karlag "Camp 29"—how many women were there at that *point?* No more, no less than six thousand![3] What kind of work did these women do? Yelena O. worked as a loader. She used to haul bags weighing 175 to 200 pounds each! True, she was given help in getting them up on her shoulders, yes, and in her youth she had been a gymnast too. (Yelena Prokofyevna Chebotaryeva worked as a loader throughout her ten-year sentence.)

At the women's camps the established pattern of conduct was

3. This is relevant to the question of *the total number* of zeks in the Archipelago. Who knew this Camp 29? And was it the last one in Karlag? And how many people were there in each of the remaining camps? Anyone with the time to spare can multiply it for himself! And who knew a certain Fifth Construction Sector of the Rybinsk hydro project? In fact, there were more than a hundred barracks there and, given even the least possible crowding, a good six thousand were to be found there too. Loshchilin recollects that there were more than ten thousand.

generally unfeminine and cruel, incessant cursing, incessant fights, misbehavior. Otherwise you'd not survive. (But, as the unconvoyed engineer Prokhorov-Pustover reports: women taken from a women's unit such as that and assigned as servants or to decent work immediately changed into quiet and hard-working women. He had occasion to observe such units in the thirties, on the Baikal-Amur Main Line working on second-tracking the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Here is a picture: On a hot day three hundred women asked the convoy to permit them to bathe in a flooded ravine. The convoy refused permission. At that point the women undressed to their bare skins and lay down to sun themselves—right along the railroad track in sight of all the passing trains. While local trains carrying Soviet citizens were passing by, this was no disaster, but they were expecting the international express, in which there were foreigners. The women refused to obey orders to put their clothes on. So then the authorities summoned the local fire department and frightened them off with hoses.)

Here is what *women's* work was like in Krivoshchekovo. At the brickyard, when they had completed working one section of the clay pit, they used to take down the overhead shelter (before they had mined there, it had been laid out on the surface of the earth). And now it was necessary to hoist wet beams ten to twelve yards up out of a big pit. How was it done? The reader will say: with machines. Of course. A women's brigade looped a cable around each end of a beam, and in two rows like barge haulers, keeping even so as not to let the beam drop and then have to begin over again, pulled one side of each cable and . . . out came the beam. And then a score of them would hoist up one beam on their shoulders to the accompaniment of command oaths from their out-and-out slave driver of a woman brigadier and would carry the beam to its new place and dump it there. A tractor, did you say? But, for pity's sakes, where would you get a tractor in 1948? A crane, you say? But you have forgotten Vyshinsky: "work, the miracle worker which transforms people from nonexistence and insignificance into heroes"? If there were a crane . . . then what about the miracle worker? If there were a crane . . . then these women would simply wallow in insignificance!

The body becomes worn out at that kind of work, and every-

thing that is feminine in a woman, whether it be constant or whether it be monthly, ceases to be. If she manages to last to the next "commissioning," the person who undresses before the physicians will be not at all like the one whom the trusties smacked their lips over in the bath corridor: she has become ageless; her shoulders stick out at sharp angles, her breasts hang down in little dried-out sacs; superfluous folds of skin form wrinkles on her flat buttocks; there is so little flesh above her knees that a big enough gap has opened up for a sheep's head to stick through or even a soccer ball; her voice has become hoarse and rough and her face is tanned by pellagra. (And, as a gynecologist will tell you, several months of logging will suffice for the prolapse and falling out of a more important organ.)

Work—*the miracle worker!*

Nothing is ever equal, by and large, in life, and this is all the more true in camp. And not everyone had the same hopeless fate at work. And the younger they were sometimes, the easier things were for them. I can just see the sturdy nineteen-year-old Napolnaya, her peasant cheeks ruddy all over. In the minicamp at the Kaluga Gates she was crane operator on the turret crane. She used to climb up like a monkey to her seat in the crane, and sometimes she would crawl out on its swinging arm without any need to, and shout to the whole construction yard "Hi-ho!" And from the cabin she would shout back and forth with the free construction superintendent, with the foremen—she had no telephone. Everything was amusing to her, gay, as if she weren't in camp: Go join the Komsomol. She smiled at everyone with some sort of good nature untypical of camp. She always was given 140 percent—the highest ration in camp. And no enemy was fearsome to her (well, other than the *godfather*). Her construction superintendent would not have allowed anyone to offend her. The only thing I don't know was how she managed to learn to be a crane operator. Did she get into that work without some self-interest somewhere? She was in for one of the inoffensive nonpolitical articles. Strength blazed out all over her. And the position she had won for herself permitted her to give her love not out of need but from her own heart's desire.

Sachkova, who was imprisoned at nineteen, describes her own position in the same light. She got into an agricultural penal colony, where, incidentally, there is always more to eat and where

things are therefore easier. "I used to run from reaping machine to reaping machine with a song on my lips, and learned to tie up sheaves." If one has no other youth but youth in camp then . . . one has to be gay there too, where else? And then she was taken to the tundra near Norilsk, and Norilsk, too, "seemed like some sort of fairy-tale city I had dreamed about in childhood." Having served out her term, she stayed there as a free employee. "I remember I was walking in a blizzard, and all of a sudden I was seized by a mood of exaltation and I walked along, waving my arms, fighting with the blizzard, singing the song 'The Heart Is Joyful from a Gay Song.' I looked at the iridescent curtain of the northern lights, threw myself down on the snow, and looked up into the sky. I wanted to sing so loudly that Norilsk could hear me: that it was not the five years that had conquered me but I them, that all those barbed wires and sleeping shelves and convoys had come to an end. I wanted to love! I wanted to do something for people so there would be no more evil in the world."

Well, yes, many others wanted that too.

Sachkova, nonetheless, did not manage to free us from evil: the camps still stand. But she herself had good luck: after all, not five years but five weeks are enough to destroy both the woman and the human being.

And only these two cases contrast in my investigation with thousands that were joyless or unconscionable.

But, of course, where else but in camp would you experience your first love if they had imprisoned you *for fifteen years* (on a political charge) as an eighth-grader, like Nina Peregud? How could you fail to fall in love with the handsome jazz musician Vasily Kozmin, who not long before, out in freedom, had been adored by the whole city, and in his aura of fame and glory had seemed unattainable? And Nina wrote her verses "A Twig of White Lilac," and he set them to music and sang them to her over the perimeter barrier separating the compounds. (They had already separated them, and again he was unattainable.)

The girls of the Krivoshchekovo barracks also pinned flowers in their hair—a sign they had . . . a camp marriage, but also, perhaps . . . that they were in love?

External legislation (for outside Gulag) seemingly abetted

camp love. An All-Union Decree of July 8, 1944, on the strengthening of marriage ties was accompanied by an unpublished decree of the Council of People's Commissars and an instruction of the People's Commissariat of Justice dated November 27, 1944, in which it was stated that the court was required to dissolve unconditionally a marriage with a spouse in prison (or in an insane asylum) at the first indication of desire on the part of a free Soviet person, and even to encourage this by freeing such a person from the fee for issuance of a divorce decree. (And at the same time no one was obliged legally to inform the other spouse of the accomplished divorce!) By this token, citizenesses and citizens were called on to abandon their imprisoned wives and husbands all the more speedily in misfortune. And prisoners were correspondingly invited . . . to forget about their marriages all the more thoroughly. Now it became not only silly and nonsocialist but also illicit for a woman to languish for a husband from whom she had been separated if he remained out in freedom. Zoya Yakusheva was imprisoned as a ChS—Family Member—because of her husband, and here's how it went with her. After three years, her husband was liberated as an important specialist, but he did not make his wife's release an obligatory condition of his own. And she had to drag out her *eight* full years because of him.

Yes, the zeks were to forget about their marriages, but Gulag instructions also forbade indulgence in love affairs as a diversionary action against the production plan. After all, these unscrupulous women who wandered about the work sites, forgetting their obligations to the state and the Archipelago, were ready to lie down on their backs anywhere at all—on the damp ground, on wood chips, on road stone, on slag, on iron shavings—and the plan would collapse! And the Five-Year Plan would mark time! And there would be no prize money for the Gulag chiefs! And besides some of those *zechkas* secretly nurtured a desire to get pregnant and, on the strength of this pregnancy, exploiting the humanitarianism of our laws, to snatch several months off their terms, which were often a short three or five years anyway, and not work at all those months. That was why Gulag instructions required that any prisoners caught cohabiting should be immediately separated, and that the less useful of the two should be sent off on a prisoner transport. (Now this, of course,

had nothing in common with those cruel Saltychikhas in serf times who used to send girl serfs off to distant villages.)

All that lyrical love beneath pea jackets was also vexatious for the custodial staff. At nights when the citizen jailer might otherwise have snored away in his duty room, he had to go about with a flashlight and catch all those brazen naked-legged women in bunks in the men's barracks and those men over in the women's barracks. Not to mention his own possible lusts (for, after all, the citizen jailer was not made of stone either), he had furthermore the labor of hauling the offender off to the punishment block or perhaps spending the whole long night remonstrating with her, explaining to her in what way her conduct had been improper, and then writing a complete report on the subject (which, given lack of higher education, was even a torment).

Plundered of everything that fulfills female life and indeed human life in general—of family, motherhood, the company of friends, familiar and perhaps even interesting work, in some cases perhaps in art or among books, and crushed by fear, hunger, abandonment, and savagery—what else could the women camp inmates turn to except love? With God's blessing the love which came might also be almost not of the flesh, because to do it in the bushes was shameful, to do it in the barracks in everyone's presence was impossible, and the man was not always up to it, and then the jailers would drag the culprits out of every *hideout* (seclusion) and put them in the punishment block. But from its unfleshly character, as the women remember today, the spirituality of camp love became even more profound. And it was particularly because of the absence of the flesh that this love became more poignant than out in freedom! Women who were already elderly could not sleep nights because of a chance smile, because of some fleeting mark of attention they had received. So sharply did the light of love stand out against the dirty, murky camp existence!

N. Stolyarova saw the "conspiracy of happiness" on the face of her girl friend, a Moscow actress, and on that of the latter's illiterate partner at hay-hauling, Osman. The actress revealed that no one had ever loved her that way before—neither her film-director husband nor all her former admirers. And only because of this did she decline to be taken off hay-hauling, from the general work.

Then there was the risk—almost like war, almost fatal: as punishment for one discovered rendezvous, you might be sent away from a place grown habitable—in other words, pay with your life. Love on the knife edge of danger, where personalities deepen so and unfold, where every inch is paid for with sacrifices—that is heroic love! (In Ortau, Anya Lekhtonen stopped loving—fell out of love with—her sweetheart in the course of those twenty minutes when the guard was leading them to the punishment block and her sweetheart was humiliatingly begging the guard to let him go.) Some became the kept women of trusties without love—in order to save themselves, and others went on *general work*—and perished—for love.

And women who were not at all young turned out to be involved in this too, even placing the jailers in a quandary: out in freedom no one would ever have considered such a woman! And these women did not seek passion, but to satisfy their need to look after someone, to keep him warm, to sacrifice their own rations in order to feed him up, to wash and darn for him. The common bowl out of which they ate was their sacred wedding ring. "I do not need to sleep with him, but in our beastly life, in which we curse each other in the barracks the whole day long over the bread ration and over rags, I keep thinking to myself: Today I must mend his shirt, and boil his potatoes," one woman explained to Dr. Zubov. But the man at times wanted more, and it was necessary to yield, and *right then* the supervisors would catch them. . . . And that was how, in Unzhlag, the hospital laundress Auntie Polya, who had been widowed very early, who had subsequently been alone all her life, and who had later helped out in a church, was caught at night with a man at the very tail end of her camp term. "How did that happen, Auntie Polya?" The doctors were astonished. "We were counting on you. And now they are going to send you out to *general work*." "Yes, I'm to blame," the old woman nodded, crushed. "In the Gospel sense I'm a sinner, and in the camp sense a ———."

But in the punishment of lovers who had been caught, as in the entire structure of Gulag, there was no fairness. If one of the pair was a trusty, close to the chiefs, or very much needed at work, then they might for years look through their fingers at this liaison. (When an unconvoyed electrical repairman appeared at the Women's Hospital Camp of Unzhlag, all the free em-

ployees were interested in his services, and the chief doctor, a free woman, summoned the nurse housekeeper, a zechka, and gave instructions: "Create suitable conditions for Musa Butenko." Musa was the nurse because of whom the repairman had come.) But if the zeks involved were insignificant or in disfavor, they were punished swiftly and cruelly.

In Mongolia, in the GULZhDS Camp (our zeks built a railroad there from 1947 to 1950), two unconvoyed girls were caught running to see friends in the men's column. The guard tied them behind his horse and, mounting the horse, *dragged them across the steppe.*[4] None of your serf-owning Saltychikhas did that! But they used to do it at Solovki.

Eternally persecuted, exposed, and separated, these native couples could not, it would seem, be long-lasting or stable. At the same time, however, cases are known in which they managed to keep up a correspondence and got together again after their release. One such case is known, for example: One doctor, B.Y.S., an assistant professor at a provincial medical institute, lost count of his liaisons in camp—he had not let even one nurse get by, and there were others too! But in this long line he encountered Z., and the line stopped. Z. did not cut short her pregnancy and gave birth to a child. B.S. was released shortly afterward and, having no limitations on him, could have gone to his own native city. But he remained in the camp as a free employee so as to be near Z. and the child. His own wife, losing patience, came to him there. At this point he hid from her inside *the camp compound.* (Where, of course, his wife could not get to him!) He lived there with Z. and communicated to his wife by every possible means that he had divorced her and that she should go away.

But it was not only the custodial staff and camp chiefs who would break up camp marriages. The Archipelago was such an upside-down land that in it a man and a woman could be split up by what ought to have united them even more firmly: the birth of a child. A month before giving birth a pregnant woman was transported to another camp, where there was a camp

4. Who today will seek out his name? And him? Yes, and if one were even to speak to him about it, he would be astonished: What's he guilty of? He was ordered to do it! So why did they have to go to the men anyway, the bitches?

hospital with a maternity ward and where husky little voices shouted that they did not want to be zeks because of the sins of their parents. After giving birth the mother was sent to a special nearby camp for *mamki*—nursing mothers.

And right here we have to interrupt! Right here it is impossible not to interrupt! How much self-ridicule there is in this world! "We are . . . not the real thing!" The zek language dearly loves and makes stubborn use of all these disparaging diminutive Russian suffixes: not "mat"—mother—but *mamka*; not "bolnitsa"—hospital—but bol*nichka*; not "svidaniye"—a rendezvous—but svidan*ka*; not "pomilovaniye"—pardon—but pomilov*ka*; not "volny"—a free person—but volny*ashka*; not "zhenitsa"—to marry a woman—but pod*zhenitsa*—to "submarry," this being the same derisiveness even though not in the suffix. And even chetvertnaya (a twenty-five-year term) is demoted to chetvert*aka*—from twenty-five rubles to twenty-five kopecks!

By this insistent bias of the language, the zeks demonstrate also that nothing in the Archipelago is genuine, everything is a forgery, everything is of the lowest grade. And that they themselves do not set any value on the things ordinary people value. They show awareness of the fake nature of the medical treatment they get, the fake character of the petitions for pardon which they write out of compulsion and without faith. And by demoting the slang term for a twenty-five-year sentence from twenty-five rubles to twenty-five kopecks the zek wants to demonstrate his own superiority even to what is almost a life term!

And so it is that the "mamki" live and work at their own camp, being taken from there at intervals under convoy to breast-feed the newly born natives. The child meanwhile is no longer in the hospital, but in a "children's village" or "infants' home," as it is called in different places. After the end of the breast-feeding period the mothers are no longer allowed visits to their babies—except perhaps as an exception to the general rule because of "model labor and discipline." (The point, of course, was not to have to keep the mothers close by because of the baby but to be able to send them off to work wherever they were required.) But most often the woman doesn't return to her old camp and her camp "husband" either. And the father will not see his child at all, by and large, as long as he is in camp. After being weaned the children are kept a year in the children's village. (They are fed

on norms for free children, and therefore the medical and housekeeping personnel around them get well fed too.) Some children cannot adjust to artificial feeding without their mothers and die. The survivors are sent after a year to a general orphanage. And thus it is that the son of two natives may depart from the Archipelago for the time being, though not without hope of returning as a *juvenile offender.*

Those who kept track of this said it was infrequent for a mother to take her child from an orphanage after release (and the women thieves . . . never did). So that many of these children who had breathed in the infected air of the Archipelago with the first breath of their tiny lungs were thus damned from the start. Others . . . did take them or, even before their own release, sent some ignorant old women for them (perhaps religious women). And despite the harm thereby done the government's upbringing and the irreparable loss to Gulag of funds allotted for the maternity home, for the mother's maternity leave, and for maintenance of the infants' home, Gulag released these children.

During all those years, prewar and war, when pregnancy separated camp spouses and broke up those hard-won, doggedly concealed, constantly threatened and in any case fragile unions . . . women tried not to have children. And again the Archipelago was not like freedom: in the years when abortions were prohibited and prosecuted out in freedom, and were very difficult to obtain . . . the camp chiefs here took an indulgent attitude toward abortions, which were often carried out in hospitals: after all, it was best for the camp.

And these issues of whether to give birth or not, which were difficult enough for any woman at all, were still more confused for a woman camp inmate. And what would happen to the child subsequently? And if such a fickle camp fate gave one the chance to become pregnant by one's loved one, then how could one go ahead and have an abortion? Should you have the child? That meant certain separation immediately, and when you left would he not pair off with some other woman in the same camp? And what kind of child would it be? (Because of the malnutrition of the parents it was often defective.) And when you stopped nursing the child and were sent away (you still had many years left to serve), would they keep an eye out so as not to do him in? And would you be able to take the child into your own

34. The Glebovs

family? (For some this was excluded.) And if you didn't take him, would your conscience then torment you all your life? (For some—not at all.)

Those who counted on being united with the father of their child after release went into motherhood in camp with self-assurance and confidence. (And sometimes these expectations worked out. Here is A. Glebov with his camp wife twenty years afterward: with them is their daughter born back in Unzhlag, who is now nineteen; what a lovely girl she is too; and another daughter, born out in freedom ten years later, when the parents *had served out* their terms. [Illustration No. 34.]) There were those who went into it who passionately desired to experience motherhood—in camp, since that was the only life they had. After all, this is a living thing sucking at your breast—not fake or ersatz, and not second-grade either. (The Harbin girl Lyalya had a second child only in order to be able to return to the children's village and see her first there! And then she had a third so as to return to see the first two. And having served out her five-year sentence she managed to keep all three of them and was released with them.) Irreparably humiliated, the camp women were reconfirmed in their human dignity through mother-

hood and for a short time felt as though they had attained equality with free women. Or else: "So I am a prisoner, but my child is free!" And they jealously demanded maintenance and care for the child on the same level as for a genuinely free child. Others, usually from among the veteran camp women and the thieves, looked upon motherhood as a year of *loafing*, sometimes as a way of *early release*. They did not even consider their own child to be their own, and did not even want to see it, and did not even try to find out whether it was alive.

The mothers from the *zakhidnitsy*—Western Ukrainians—and sometimes from among the Russians too—the more simple folk in origin—sought persistently to have their children christened. (This was in the postwar years.) The crucifix was either sent carefully hidden in a parcel (the jailers would never have permitted such counterrevolution to get through) or else was ordered from some clever fellow in camp in return for bread. They also used to get a ribbon for the cross, and managed to make a fancy baby's vest, and a cap. By saving up sugar from their ration they managed to bake a tiny christening cake out of something or other—and their closest women friends were invited. There was always a woman who could pronounce a prayer—any prayer would do—and the child was dipped in warm water and baptized, and the glowing mother invited everyone to the table.

For "mamki" with nursing children (though not, of course, for the 58's among them) special amnesties were sometimes issued, or else simply orders for release ahead of term.

Those most often affected by these orders were habitual criminals involved in lesser crimes and women thieves—and they were the ones who had, in fact, been partly counting on these benefits. And just as soon as these "mamki" had received their passport and their railway ticket in the nearest provincial center, they often left their child, who was no longer needed, right there on the station bench or on the first porch they came to. (But one does have to realize that not all of them could expect to find housing, or a sympathetic greeting from the police, or passport registration, or work, and there would not be a camp ration ready and waiting for them the next morning either. It was easier to begin to live without the child.)

In 1954 at the Tashkent Station I happened to be spending the night not far from a group of zeks who were on their way from camp and who had been released on the basis of some special

order. There were about three dozen of them, and they took up a whole corner of the hall, behaving very noisily, with a semi-underworld insolence, like genuine children of Gulag, knowing what life was worth and holding in contempt all the free people there. The men played cards and the "mamki" argued loudly about something. And all of a sudden one mother screamed something more shrilly than the rest, jumped up, swung her child by the legs and audibly banged his head on the cement floor. The hallful of *free* people gasped: A mother! How could a *mother* do that!

. . . They just didn't understand that it was not a mother—but a *mamka.*

■

Everything said so far refers to *joint,* coeducational, camps, such as existed from the first years of the Revolution right up to the end of World War II. In those years in the Russian Republic there was only the Novinsky House of Detention (converted from a former Moscow women's prison) where women only were imprisoned. This experiment did not spread, and did not even last very long itself.

But having risen, safe and sound, from beneath the ruins of the war, which he had nearly lost, the Teacher and Founder took thought as to the welfare of his subjects. His thoughts were now freed to look to the ordering of their lives, and much that he devised at this time was useful, much was moral, and, among other things, the male sex and the female sex were separated—first in schools and camps. (And then, perhaps, he hoped to extend this to all *freedom* as well—and in China there was such an experiment, even more extensive.)

And in 1946 the great and complete separation of women from men began in the Archipelago, and in 1948 it was completed. They sent them to different islands, and within any one island they stretched that well-tried friend, barbed wire, between the women's and the men's camp compounds.[5]

But like many other scientifically forecast and scientifically

5. Many of the initiatives of the great Coryphaeus have by now been admitted to be not altogether so perfect, and many of them have been abolished. But the separation of the sexes in the Archipelago has remained hard and fast right to this very day. For here the basis is a profoundly moral one.

thought-out actions, this measure, too, had unexpected consequences which were the exact opposite of those intended.

With the separation of women from men, the women's general situation at work worsened sharply. Previously, at mixed camps many women had worked as laundresses, hospital attendants, cooks and kitchen attendants, storeroom attendants and accountants. And now they had to yield all these positions, and there were far fewer of them in the women's camps. And the women were driven out to general work, driven into brigades exclusively of women, where things were particularly hard for them. To get off general work for at least a while became a question of life and death. And the women began to pursue pregnancy, trying to catch it from any passing encounter, any contact. Pregnancy did not, as before, carry the threat of being parted from a spouse—all partings had already been bestowed in one single Wise Decree.

And now the number of children who entered the infants' homes *doubled* in one year! (Unzhlag, 1948: three hundred compared with one hundred and fifty.) Even though the number of imprisoned women did not increase during this period.

"What are you going to call the little girl?" "Olympiada. I got pregnant at the Olympiad of amateur stage performances." Out of inertia such forms of cultural activity were retained: Olympiads, visits by male cultural brigades to women's camps, joint rallies of shock workers. Common hospitals were likewise retained—and they, too, became houses of assignation. They say that in Solikamsk Camp in 1946 the wires separating the men from the women were few in number and strung on one set of posts (and, of course, no armed guard there). And the insatiable natives thronged to this wire from both sides, with the women in the position they would have been in had they been washing floors, and the men took them without crossing the forbidden line.

After all, immortal Eros is worth something! It was not just a reasoned calculation for getting out of general work. The zeks sensed that this line was being drawn there for a long time to come and that it would, like everything else in Gulag, only harden, become more rigid.

If before the separation of the sexes there was amicable cohabitation, camp marriage, even love, now it had become merely plain lechery.

Of course, the chiefs were not dozing, and corrected their scientific predictions as they went along. To the one row of barbed wire they added forbidden zones on either side. And then, recognizing these barriers to be insufficient, they replaced them with a six-foot-high fence—also with prohibited zones on either side.

In Kengir even that barrier did not help; the intending lovers leaped over it. Then on Sundays (for it was impossible to spend workdays on this! Yes, and it was natural that people should occupy themselves with their living arrangements on their days off) they began to hand out special Sunday jobs on either side of the barricade, and compelled them to raise the height of the wall to twelve feet. And here's what's funny: the zeks really went out to those Sunday work assignments gaily! Before their final farewells they might at least make someone's acquaintance on the other side of the wall, chat a bit, arrange to correspond!

Later in Kengir they increased the height of the dividing wall to fifteen feet, and stretched barbed wire, too, along the top. And then they added a high-voltage wire as well. (How strong that cursed Cupid is!) And in addition to everything else they put watchtowers at both ends as well. This Kengir wall had its own special destiny in the history of the whole Archipelago (see Part V, Chapter 12). But they built others like it, too, in other Special Camps (for example, in Spassk).

One has to picture to oneself the well-reasoned methodology of these employers who thought it entirely natural to divide the slave men from the slave women with barbed wire but would have been astonished if anyone had proposed that the same be done to themselves and their families.

The walls grew—and Eros dashed back and forth. Finding no other sphere, he either flew too high—into platonic correspondence—or else too low—into homosexual love.

Notes were thrown over the fence, or else left at the factory in prearranged hiding places. The addresses on the notes were coded, so the jailer, if he found them, couldn't work out who was writing whom. (By now, the punishment for notes was the camp prison.)

Galya Venediktova recalls that sometimes people even made one another's acquaintance blindly, corresponded without seeing each other, and said farewell to one another blindly too, without

seeing each other. (Anyone who has ever conducted such a correspondence knows both its desperate sweetness and its hopelessness and blindness.) In that very same Kengir, Lithuanian women were *married* across the wall to Lithuanian men whom they had never seen or met; and the Lithuanian Roman Catholic priest (also, of course, a prisoner in the standard pea jacket) would provide written documentation that so-and-so and so-and-so had been joined for eternity in holy matrimony in the eyes of God. In this marriage with an unknown prisoner on the other side of a wall—and for Roman Catholic women such a marriage was irreversible and sacred—I hear a choir of angels. It is like the unselfish, pure contemplation of the heavenly bodies. It is too lofty for this age of self-interested calculation and hopping-up-and-down jazz.

The Kengir marriages also had an unexpected outcome. The heavens heard the prayers and intervened. (Part V, Chapter 12.)

And the women themselves and the doctors who treated them in the divided compounds confirm that the women suffered worse than the men from the separation. They were particularly excited and nervous. Lesbian love developed swiftly. The gentle and the young went about looking sallow, with dark circles under their eyes. The women of a cruder type became the "men." No matter how the jailers tried to break up such pairs they turned up again in the same bunks. They sent one or the other of these "spouses" away from the camp. Stormy dramas burst out, with people leaping onto the barbed wire under fire from the sentries.

In the Karaganda division of Steplag, where women solely from Article 58 were assembled, many of them, N.V. recounts, awaited a summons to the security chief with palpitations—not with fear or hatred for that loathsome political interrogation, but with heart palpitating because this man would lock you up alone in the room with him.

The separate women's camps bore the same full burden of general work. True, in 1951, logging by women was formally forbidden—hardly because it was the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century. But in Unzhlag, for example, the men's camps could not fulfill the plans at all. And then a method was devised to spur them on—to compel the natives to pay with their own work for what is provided without payment to every living thing in the whole wide world. They began to drive the

women out to logging too, in a single convoy cordon with the men, with only a ski track separating them. All the timber cut here was subsequently to be registered as the output of the men's camp, but the norm was demanded from both men and women. Here is what a chief with two stripes on his shoulder boards said to Lyuba Beryozina, the "timber foreman": "If you and your broads fulfill the norm, Belenky will be in your cabin!" But now both the strongest men sloggers, and especially the work trusties who had money, shoved it at the convoy guards (who couldn't exactly go out on the town on their wages either), and for an hour and a half (until the bribed guard changed) they rushed across into the women's cordon.

In the space of this hour and a half in the snowy frigid woods, a man had to pick one out, get acquainted with her (if they hadn't corresponded before), find a place, and do it.

But why rake up all that past? Why reopen the old wounds of those who were living in Moscow and in country houses at the time, writing for the newspapers, speaking from rostrums, going off to resorts and abroad?

Why recall all that when it is still the same even today? After all, you can only write about whatever "will not be repeated."

Chapter 9

■

The Trusties

One of the first native concepts a newcomer coming to a camp learns is that of the *trusty*.* That is what the natives rudely called everyone who managed not to share the common, foredoomed lot—who either got out of *general work* or never ever got into it.

There was no lack of trusties in the Archipelago. Limited in the living zone to a strict percentage of registration Group "B," and at work by staff tables, they nonetheless always managed to surge over that percentage—partly because of the pressure from those desiring to save their skins, partly because of the ineptitude of the camp bosses, who were incapable of managing and administering with a small staff.

According to 1933 statistics of the People's Commissariat of Justice, the personnel at places of detention, including economic managers and, it's true, *trusty guards*, constituted 22 percent of the total number of natives. If we reduce this figure to 17 or 18 percent (taking out the trusty guards), this still amounts to one-sixth. So it is already clear that we are speaking in this chapter of a very significant camp phenomenon. But the total percentage of trusties was much higher than one-sixth; after all, these were only the *compound* trusties, and in addition there were all the *work* trusties. And then there was also a turnover among the trusties, and many more prisoners at one time or another during their camp career were apparently trusties for a time. And the main thing was that among those who survived, those released, the trusties constituted a very high proportion—I would say nine-tenths of the long-termers from the 58's.

Almost every long-term zek you congratulate on having survived was a trusty. Or had been one for a large part of his term.

Because the camps were destructive, and this must not be forgotten.

All classifications in this world lack sharp boundaries, and all transitions are gradual. So it is here: the edges are blurred. By and large, everyone who did not leave the camp compound during the working day could be considered a compound trusty. A worker in the camp workshops lived much more easily and better than the slogger on general work: he did not have to go out for line-up, and this meant he could rise and breakfast much later; he did not have to march under convoy to the work site and back; there were fewer severities, less cold, less strength spent; also his workday ended earlier; either his work was in a warm place or else a place to warm up was always handy. And he usually worked not in a brigade, but as an individual craftsman, which meant he did not have to put up with nagging from his comrades but only from the chiefs. And since he was often enough engaged in making something on personal orders of those same chiefs, instead of being nagged at, he even got handouts, favors, and permission to have first call on clothes and footwear. He had a good chance of earning something on orders from other zeks too. To make things more clear: the "khozdvor" was like the working part of an establishment of servants in the manor of a serf-owner. If within this category a lathe operator, a carpenter, a stovemaker, was not yet a full-fledged trusty, a shoemaker, however, and a tailor even more so, was already a high-class trusty. "Tailor" in camp sounds and means something like "Assistant Professor" out in freedom. (And the reverse side is that in camp the genuine title "Assistant Professor" sounds derisive, and it is best not to call yourself that and become a laughingstock. The camp scale of the significance of professions is quite the reverse of the scale out in freedom.)

A laundress, a hospital attendant, a dishwasher, a stoker, bath workers, a cook's helper, simple bakers, and barracks orderlies were also trusties, but of a lower class. They had to work with their hands, and sometimes hard. All, however, were well fed.

The genuine compound trusties were: cooks, bread cutters, stock clerks, doctors, medical assistants, barbers, instructors of the Cultural and Educational Section, bath managers, bakery

managers, storeroom managers, parcel room managers, senior barracks orderlies, superintendents of quarters, work assigners, accountants, clerks of the headquarters barracks, engineers of the camp compound and of the camp workshops. Not only were they all well fed, clad in clean clothes, and exempt from lifting heavy weights and from crooks in their backs, but they had great power over what was most needed by a human being, and consequently power over people. Sometimes they fought, group against group, conducted intrigues, overthrew each other, or raised each other up, or quarreled over "broads," but more often they lived in a state of joint mutual defense against the rabble, as a satisfied establishment, which had no reason to divvy things up with others since everything had long since been divvied up once and for all, and each had his own sphere. And the stronger this clique of compound trusties was, the more the camp chief depended on it, sparing himself worry. The fates of all arriving and sent off on prisoner transports, the fates of all the ordinary sloggers, were decided by these trusties.

Because of the human race's customary narrow-minded attachment to caste, it very soon became inconvenient for trusties to sleep in the same barracks as ordinary sloggers, on the same multiple bunks, or even, for that matter, on any multiple bunk at all, or anywhere else except a bed, or to eat at the same table, to undress in the same bath, or to put on the same underwear in which the sloggers had sweated and which they had torn. And so the trusties set themselves apart in small rooms with two, four, or eight persons in each, and ate there food of their choice, supplementing it illegally, discussed all camp appointments and business, including the fates of people and of brigades, without the risk of running into insults from the sloggers or brigadiers. They spent their leisure separately (and they had leisure). They had their "individual" bed linen changed on a separate schedule. By virtue of the same caste foolishness they tried to be distinctive from the camp masses in clothing too, but these possibilities were not great. If in a particular camp black padded jackets or ordinary jackets predominated, they would try to get dark blue ones from the storeroom, and if dark blue ones predominated, they put on black ones. In addition, they got the narrow camp britches broadened into bell bottoms in the tailors' shop—through use of triangular inserts.

The work trusties properly speaking consisted of the engineers, technicians, construction superintendents, foremen, heads of shops, planners, norm setters, and, in addition, accountants, secretaries, typists. They differed from the compound trusties in that they had to go out to line-up and were marched to work in a convoyed column (though sometimes they were not convoyed). But their situation on the site was privileged—they did not have to endure physical torments and were not utterly exhausted. On the contrary, the work, the feeding, the life of the sloggers was dependent in great degree on them. Even though less connected with the camp compound, they tried to defend their positions there too and to receive a significant number of the same privileges as the compound trusties, though they could never manage to catch up with them.

There were no precise boundaries here either. Also in this category were designers, technologists, geodesists, motor mechanics, machinery maintenance personnel. They were by no means "commanders of production"; they did not share the fatal power, and they had no responsibility for people's deaths (as long as these deaths were not caused by the technology of production selected or serviced by them). They were simply intelligent or even semieducated sloggers. Like every zek at work, they *faked*, deceived the chiefs, tried to drag out for a week what could be done in half a day. Customarily they lived in camp almost like sloggers, were often members of work brigades, and only in the work compound did they have it warm and peaceful. There, alone in their offices and cabins, with no free people about, they would drop the subject of government work and gossip about life, about prison terms, about the past and the future, and, most of all, about rumors that 58's (they themselves were most often recruited from the 58's) would soon be sent off to *general work*.

And for this there was a profound, uniquely scientific foundation: after all, it was virtually impossible *to correct* socially hostile prisoners, so rooted were they in their class corruption. The majority could be corrected only by the grave. And even if, nonetheless, a certain minority was indeed capable of being corrected, then, of course, it could only be by *labor*, physical labor, heavy labor (replacing machines), the sort of labor which would have been degrading for a *camp* officer or jailer, but which nonetheless once created the human being from the ape (and in camp inex-

plicably transforms him back into an ape again). And that is why it is not at all out of vengeance but only in the faint hope of correcting the 58's that it is strictly stated in the Gulag regulations (and this regulation is continually being renewed) that persons condemned under Article 58 cannot occupy any privileged positions either in the camp compound or at work. (The only prisoners able to occupy positions having to do with material values are ones who out in freedom have already distinguished themselves by stealing.) And that is how it would have been—for, after all, the camp chiefs hardly harbored any love for the 58's. But they did know: that there were not even one-fifth as many specialists under all the other articles combined as under 58. The physicians and engineers were almost entirely 58's. And you'd not find better workers or more straightforwardly honest people even among the free employees. And so in covert opposition to the One-and-Only Scientific Theory, the employers began surreptitiously assigning 58's to trusty positions. Meanwhile the most lucrative ones always remained in the hands of the nonpolitical offenders, with whom the chiefs found it easier to make deals—and too much honesty would have even been a hindrance. So they used to put the 58's in trusty positions, but with each renewal of this regulation (and it kept being renewed), and before the arrival of any verification commission (and they kept arriving), a wave of the chief's white hand would send off the 58's to *general work* without hesitation or regrets. Temporary well-being painstakingly built up over months was shattered to bits in one fell day. But this expulsion was not so ruinous in itself as were the eternal rumors of its approach, which ground down and wore out the political trusties. These rumors poisoned the trusty's whole existence. Only the nonpolitical offenders could enjoy their trusty situation serenely. (However, the commission would come and go, the work would quietly fall apart again, and the engineers would once again be quietly hauled in to fill trusty positions, only to be driven out when the next commission was due.)

And other than the plain, ordinary 58's, there were also those whose prison files had been branded with a separate curse from Moscow: "To be used only on general work!" Many of the Kolyma prisoners in 1938 carried this brand. And for them to get work as a laundress or a drier of felt boots was an unattainable dream.

How does the *Communist Manifesto* go? "The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe." (A certain resemblance here!) "It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage laborers."[1]* Well, at least they were paid! And at least they were left to work in their own "field of professional specialization"! And what if they had been sent out to *general work?* To logging? And unpaid! And unfed! True, physicians were sent out on general work only rarely: after all, they were called upon to cure the chiefs' families as well. But as for lawyers, priests, poets, and men of science—they were only fit to rot doing general work. There was no place for them among the trusties.

The *brigadiers* occupied a special position in the camp. In camp terms they were not considered trusties, but you couldn't call them sloggers either. Therefore the arguments advanced in this chapter apply to them as well.

■

Just as in battle, so in camp life there is no time for discussion; a position as trusty becomes available—so you grab it.

But years and decades have passed. We have survived and our comrades have perished. To astounded *free people* and our indifferent heirs we are beginning to disclose bit by bit the world of then and there, which had almost nothing human in it—and we must evaluate it in the light of the human conscience.

And one of the principal moral questions here concerns the trusties.

In choosing the hero of my story about the camps I chose a slogger, and I could not have chosen anyone else, for only he could perceive the true interrelationships of camp life. (Just as it is only the infantryman who can weigh a whole war in the balance, though for some reason it is not he who writes the war memoirs.) This choice of a hero and certain sharp remarks in my story perplexed and offended some former trusties—and, as I have already said, nine-tenths of the survivors are indeed trusties. Thereupon

1. Marx and Engels, *Sobrannye Sochineniya* (*Collected Works*), 1928 edition, Vol. IV, p. 427.

"Memoirs of a Trusty," by Dyakov, appeared (*Memoirs of Survival*),* complacently confirming their resourcefulness in getting well fixed and cleverness in surviving at any cost. (And this is precisely the sort of book that should have appeared before my own.)

In those few short months when it seemed possible to *discuss*, a certain amount of debate flared up about the role of the trusties, and a certain general question was raised of the moral position of the trusty in camp. But in our country they do not permit any information to be X-rayed through and through, nor any discussion to encompass all the facets of a subject. All this is invariably suppressed at the very beginning—so no ray of light should fall on the naked body of truth. And then all this is piled up in one formless heap covering many years, where it languishes for whole decades—until all interest and all means of sorting out the rusty blocks from all this trash are lost. And so it was that all discussion of the trusties was dampened down at the very beginning, and passed out of the pages of the public press into private letters.

And the distinction between a trusty and a slogger in camp (though no sharper than that which existed in reality) had to be made, and it was very good that it was made right at the very birth of the camp theme in literature. But in V. Lakshin's censored article[2] there was a certain excessiveness of expression on the subject of camp labor (seeming to glorify that very thing which replaced machines and created us from the apes), and the generally correct direction of the article and to a certain extent my own novella as well were met with a counterwave of indignation —both from former trusties and from their never-imprisoned intellectual friends: What's going on here . . . is slave labor being glorified (the cinder-block-laying scene in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*)?! What's going on here . . . since when does "earn your bread by the sweat of your brow" mean do what the Gulag chiefs want you to? *We* trusties are particularly proud that we avoided work and didn't drag out our existence at it.

In answering these objections right now, I only regret that they will not be read for some time.

In my opinion, it is unworthy of an intellectual to be proud of the fact that he didn't descend to physical slave labor, you see,

2. *Novy Mir*, 1964, No. 1.

because he was able to get into office work. In this situation the Russian intellectuals of the past century would have presumed to boast *only* if, at the same time, they could have *liberated their younger brother from slave labor* as well. After all, Ivan Denisovich didn't have that way out—fixing himself up with an office job! So what should we do about our *younger brother?* Is it all right to let our younger brother drag out his existence at slave labor? (Well, why not? After all, we've been letting him do it long enough on the collective farms! We even fixed him up with it there!) But if we let him do this, then maybe, at least once in a while, for at least an hour or so on occasion, before knocking off, when the masonry work has gone well, we can let him take an interest in his work? *We*, after all, even in camp, find a certain enjoyment in sliding the pen along the paper, in drawing a black line on tracing paper with a drawing pen. How could Ivan Denisovich get through ten years if all he could do was curse his work day and night? After all, in that case he would have had to hang himself on the first handy hook!

And what, then, can one say about such an unlikely story as this: Pavel Chulpenyov, who had worked at logging for seven years in a row (and at a penalty camp at that), could hardly have survived and kept working if he had not found meaning and interest in that logging. Here is how he stood it: The camp chief, who took an interest in his few permanent workers (a surprising camp chief), in the first place fed them "belly full" with gruel, and in the second place permitted only his record-holding shock workers to work nights in the kitchen. This was their bonus! After a whole day of logging Chulpenyov went to wash and fill the food pots, stoke the oven, and clean potatoes until 2 A.M., and after that ate his fill and went off to sleep for three hours without taking off his pea jacket. Once, also as a bonus, he was allowed to work for one month in the bread-cutting room. And he rested up another month by self-mutilation (because he was a record holder no one suspected him). And that is all. (But, of course, explanations are required here too. In their work gang was a woman thief, a veteran bazaar swindler who worked for a year as their draywoman, and she was living with two trusties at the same time: the weighing-in checker and the warehouse manager. As a result, their work gang always overfulfilled its norm, and, more important, their horse, Gerchik, ate all the

oats he wanted and hauled well. Other horses were rationed according to the work gang's norm fulfillment! I am sick of saying, *"Poor people!"* At least here I can interject, "Poor horses!") But nonetheless *seven years on logging without interruption*—it is almost a legend! But how could you work for seven years if you didn't work well, if you didn't find some meaning in it, if you didn't become absorbed in the work? All they had to do, said Chulpenyov, was to feed me and I would have kept working and working. That's the Russian character. . . . He mastered the technique of "continuous felling"—felling in such a way that the first branch supported the trunk so it didn't sag, and was easy to trim. And all the subsequent trunks were dropped atop one another crisscross so the branches fell neatly into one or two bonfires, without having to be hauled away. He knew how to "pull" a falling tree in exactly the required direction. And when he heard from the Lithuanians about Canadian lumberjacks who for a wager would put a stake in the ground and then drive it down into the ground with a falling tree, he was filled with enthusiasm: "All right, we'll try the same thing!" And it worked.

And that is how it turns out: such is man's nature that even bitter, detested work is sometimes performed with an incomprehensible wild excitement. Having worked for two years with my hands, I encountered this strange phenomenon myself: suddenly you become absorbed in the work itself, irrespective of whether it is slave labor and offers you nothing. I experienced those strange moments at bricklaying (otherwise I wouldn't have written about it), at foundry work, carpentry, even in the fervor of breaking up old pig iron with a sledge. And so surely we can allow Ivan Denisovich not to feel his inescapable labor as a terrible burden forever, not to hate it perpetually?

Well, as I see it, they will yield on this point. They will yield to us, but with the obligatory condition that no reproaches should be implied for those trusties who never spent even a minute earning their daily bread by the sweat of their brow.

Whether by the sweat of their brow or not, they at any rate carried out the commands of the Gulag bosses diligently. (Otherwise off to *general work!*) And painstakingly, using their special skills! After all, all the significant trusty positions were essential links in the camp administration and in camp production. These were precisely those specially forged ("skilled") links in the

chain without which (if every last one of the zeks had refused to accept trusty positions!) *the whole chain of exploitation would have broken,* the entire camp system! Because society *outside* could never have supplied such a quantity of highly skilled specialists who were willing in addition to live for years in conditions unfit for dogs.

So why didn't they refuse? Why didn't they break the magic chain?*

The trusties' positions were the key positions for exploitation. Norm setters! And were their bookkeeper helpers much less guilty? The construction superintendents! And were the technicians so guiltless themselves? What trusty position did not in fact involve playing up to the bosses and participating in the general system of compulsion? Was it only as Cultural and Educational Section instructors or as *godfather's* orderlies, who did the devil's work? And if N. worked as a typist—solely as a typist—yet typed out requisitions for the Administrative Section of the camp, did this mean nothing? Let us think about that. And if she ran off copies of orders? This was not for the good of the zeks. . . . Let's suppose the security officer had no typist of his own. That he himself had to type out his formal charges and the final version of the denunciations—of free persons and zeks he was going to imprison the next day. But, you see, he could give this material to the typist—and she would type it up and keep silent, without warning the endangered person. Yes, for that matter, would not a low-ranking trusty, the locksmith of the camp workshops, have to fill a requisition for handcuffs? Or strengthen the grids of iron bars in the punishment block? Or let us stay among written materials: what about the planner? Would not an innocent planner aid and abet planned exploitation?

I do not understand—in what way was this intellectual slave labor purer and nobler than physical slave labor?

So it is not Ivan Denisovich's sweat we should be getting most upset about, but the peaceful pen scratching in the camp office!

For half my term I myself worked at a *sharashka,** one of those Islands of Paradise. We were torn away from the rest of the Archipelago, we did not see its slave existence. But were we not exactly the same sort of trusties? And did we not, in the very broadest sense, by our scientific work, strengthen that same Min-

istry of Internal Affairs and the overall system of repression?[3]

And is not everything bad that goes on in the Archipelago or on the entire earth . . . accomplished through us? Yet we attacked Ivan Denisovich—for laying bricks? More of our bricks are there than his!

In camp they more often expressed the contrary insults and reproaches: that the trusties rode on the sloggers' backs, devoured their food, survived at their expense. These charges were made against the compound trusties in particular, frequently not without grounds. Who short-weighed Ivan Denisovich's bread? Who stole his sugar by dampening it with water? Who kept fats, meat, or good cereals from the common pot?

Those camp compound trusties on whom food and clothing depended were chosen on a special basis. To get those positions impudence, slyness, bribery were required; to hold such jobs ruthlessness and a deaf ear to conscience were required (and, in most cases, to be a stool pigeon as well). Of course, all generalizations overstate their case; and from my own recollections I can undertake to name opposite examples of uncorrupted, honest compound trusties—but they didn't last long in their posts. As far as the bulk of well-fixed camp compound trusties are concerned, however, one can say without fear of being wrong that on the average more depravity and malice were concentrated among them than in the average native population. It was not a matter of chance that these were the very jobs the camp bosses gave to their former cronies—imprisoned former Security people. When the MVD chief of Shakhty District was imprisoned, he wasn't sent to cut timber but popped up as work assigner at the headquarters camp of Usollag. And when MVD man Boris Guganava was imprisoned ("Because I once took a cross off a church, I have never since known any happiness in life"), he would be the manager of the camp kitchen at Reshoty Station. But another

3. And this problem goes beyond the bounds of the Archipelago. Its scale is that of our whole society. Have not all our educated strata—technologists and those trained in the humanities—been for all these decades precisely the same kind of links in the magic chain, the same kind of "trusties"? Can anyone point out to us scholars or composers or cultural historians among even the most honest of those who have survived safe, sound, and whole and who flourish, who have sacrificed themselves to establish a common life in disregard of their own?

seemingly quite different breed latched on to this group too. The Russian interrogator from Krasnodon who under the Germans had conducted the case against the Young Guard* partisans[4] was an honored work assigner in one of the divisions of Ozerlag. Sasha Sidorenko, a former intelligence agent who had fallen into German hands right off, and who had gone to work for them right off, was now storeroom manager in Kengir and loved getting back at the Germans there for his own fate. Hardly had they gone to sleep after roll call, tired from the day's work, than he would come to them pretending to be drunk and raise a heart-rending cry: "Germans! Achtung! I'm . . . your God! Sing to me!" (And the frightened Germans, rising up on their bunks half asleep, began to sing "Lilli Marlene" for him. And what kind of people were those bookkeepers who released Loshchilin[5] from camp in late autumn wearing just his shirt? Or that shoemaker in Burepolom who, without even a twinge of remorse, took Ans Bernshtein's new army boots in return for a bread ration?

When they got together on their porch for a friendly smoke and a chat about camp affairs, it was hard to picture just who among them might be different.

True, they, too, have something to say in justification of themselves. For example, I. F. Lipai wrote a passionate letter:

The prisoner's ration was outrageously and pitilessly plundered on all sides. The thievery of the trusties for their own sake . . . was petty thievery. While those trusties who engaged in larger-scale thievery were forced [?] into it. The Administration officials, both free workers and prisoners, particularly during wartime, squeezed the paw of the division officials, and the division officials did the same to the camp officials, and the latter did the same to the storeroom and kitchen personnel—and all at the expense of the zek's ration. The most fearful sharks of all were not the trusties but the nonprisoner chiefs (Kuragin, Poisui-Shapka, Ignatchenko from SevDvinlag). They did not just steal but "removed" from the storerooms, and not just by the pound, but in sacks and barrels. And again it wasn't only for themselves—they had to divvy up. And the trusties had somehow to cover all this up and forge the records. And anyone who refused to do it was not

4. The genuine content of this case, it seems, was vastly different from *even* the first version of Fadeyev. But we will not put our faith solely in camp rumors.

5. For his surprising—or too ordinary—fate, see below, Part IV, Chapter 4.

only sacked from his job but sent to a penalty or strict-regimen camp. And so the trusty staffs, by the will of the chiefs, were riddled with cowards afraid of physical work, and scoundrels and thieves. And the only ones ever prosecuted were storekeepers and bookkeepers, while the chiefs kept out of it—after all, it wasn't they who signed the receipts. And the interrogators considered it a provocation for storekeepers to testify against bosses.

The picture is quite vertical. . . .

It so fell out that a woman of my acquaintance, Natalya Milevna Anichkova, who was honest in the extreme, was once assigned to manage the camp bakery. At the very beginning she ascertained that it was customary to send a certain amount of baked bread (from the prisoners' bread rations) outside the camp compound daily (without any documents, of course), in return for which the bakers received a small amount of preserves and butter from the shop for the free employees. She forbade this system, stopped the bread leaving the camp compound—and immediately the bread began to turn out underbaked or rock hard, and then the batch would be late (this from the bakers), and then they began to withhold flour from the warehouse—and the camp chief (he had been getting more out of this than anyone!) refused a horse to fetch and deliver. Anichkova struggled for so many days and then surrendered—and at once the work went smoothly again.

Even if a compound trusty was able to keep out of this universal thievery, it was nonetheless nearly impossible for him to desist from using his privileged position to get himself other benefits—such as Rest Point out of turn, hospital food, the best clothing, bed linen, or the best place in the barracks. I do not know and cannot picture a trusty so saintly that he never grabbed the least tiny bit of something for himself from all those benefits strewn about. And his fellow trusties would have been afraid of him. They would have forced him out! Everyone, even though indirectly, or in a roundabout way, even though almost not knowing, nonetheless made use of these benefits—and in some degree lived off the sloggers.

It is hard, very hard, for a compound trusty to have an unsullied conscience.

And then there is another question—about the means with which he got his position. Very rarely was it a clear-cut question

of qualifications (as for a physician or for many work trusties). The unobjectionable path was to be an invalid. But frequently it was the protection of the "godfather." Of course, there were apparently neutral ways to get there: people got positions because of old prison connections; or thanks to collective group-support (often based on ties of nationality—certain of the smaller nationalities were successful at this and used traditionally to cluster in trusty jobs; and then the Communists used to help each other out privately).

And there was another question too. When you were raised up, how did you conduct yourself toward the rest, toward the common herd? How much arrogance was here, how much rudeness, how much forgetfulness that we were all natives and that our power was transient?

And finally the highest question of all: If you were in no way harmful to your brother prisoners, were you at least in any way useful to them? Did you ever use your position, even once, to defend the general welfare—or only and always on your own?

As far as the work trusties were concerned, it would be quite unjust to accuse them of "eating the sloggers' food," or "riding on their backs"; the sloggers weren't paid for their labor, true, but not because they fed the trusties. The trusties weren't paid for their work either—everything went into the same abyss. But the other moral doubts still remain: the virtual inevitability of exploiting advantages in living conditions; the not always clean ways of getting the right assignment; arrogance. And then always that same question at the top: What did you do for the general good? Anything at all? Ever?

Yet there were some who could, like Vasily Vlasov, look back on deeds on behalf of the universal good. Yes, such clearheaded, smart fellows who managed to get around the arbitrary camp rules, who helped to organize the common life so not all would die, and so as to deceive both the trust and the camp. Those heroes of the Archipelago, who understood their duty not in terms of feeding their own persons but as a burden and an obligation to the whole prison herd. The tongue simply cannot be twisted to call such as these "trusties." And most came from the engineers. And . . . glory to them!

But for the rest no glory. There is no reason to put them on a pedestal. And there is also no reason for the former trusties to

be contemptuous of Ivan Denisovich because they succeeded in sidestepping all kinds of slave labor and did not lay bricks by the sweat of their brow. Nor is it worth arguing that we intellectuals expend twice as much energy on general work—on the work itself, and then by a sort of psychic combustion, on all the mental activity and suffering which we simply cannot stop, and as a result of which it is fair for us to avoid the general work; and let cruder types *slog away*. (It is still not clear whether we do in fact expend twice as much energy.)

Yes, in order to abstain from coming to some sort of an "arrangement" in camp and let the force of gravity take over and drag you down to the bottom, one must have a very stable soul, a very illumined consciousness, a large part of one's term behind one, and, probably, in addition regular parcels from home—otherwise it is straight suicide.

As the gratefully guilty old camp veteran D. S. L——v put it: If I am alive today, that means someone else was on the list for execution in my place that night; if I am alive today, it means that someone else suffocated in the lower hold in my place; if I am alive today, it means that I got those extra seven ounces of bread which the dying man went without.

All this is written . . . not in reproach. The basic viewpoint of this book has already been set forth and will be held to until the end: all who suffered, all who were squeezed, all who were forced to make a cruel choice ought rather to be vindicated than accused. The more correct thing will be . . . to vindicate them.

But in forgiving oneself the choice between dying and being saved—do not forgetfully cast a stone at the one whose choice was even harder. We have already met such people in this book. And there will be more.

■

The Archipelago was a world without diplomas, a world in which the only credentials were one's own claims. The zek was not supposed to have documents with him, including educational records. In arriving at a new camp you yourself would invent who you would make yourself out to be this time.

In camp it was advantageous to be a medical assistant, a barber, an accordion player—I daren't go any higher. You would get

along all right if you were a tinsmith, a glass blower, or an automobile mechanic. But woe on you if you were a geneticist or, God help you, a philosopher, a linguist, an art historian—then you had had it! You would *kick the bucket* on general work in two weeks.

More than once I dreamed of declaring myself a medical assistant! How many writers and philologists saved themselves in the Archipelago this way! But each time I could not make up my mind to it—not even because of the superficial examination (knowing medicine within the limits of a literate layman, yes, and having a smattering of Latin, somehow or other I would have *bluffed my way through*), but I found it awful to picture myself giving shots without knowing how. If there had been only powders, syrups, poultices, and cupping, I would have tried it.

Having learned from my experience at Novy Iyerusalim that being a "commander of production" was repulsive, when I was shifted to my next camp, at Kaluga Gates, in Moscow itself—right at the threshold, at the gatehouse, I lied, saying that I was a norm setter (I had heard that term in camp for the first time in my life, and I had not the faintest idea what norm setting was, but I hoped it was along mathematical lines).

The reason I had to tell my lie right there at the gatehouse, on the threshold, was that the site chief, Junior Lieutenant Nevezhin, a tall, gloomy hunchback, came to question the new prisoner transport right away then and there at the gatehouse despite our arrival at night; he had to decide by morning who was to be sent where, he was that businesslike. With a distrustful stare he sized up my officer's britches stuffed into my boots, my long-skirted overcoat, my face lit up with eagerness to serve, and asked me a couple of questions about norm setting. (I felt I had replied skillfully, but I realized afterward that my first two words had exposed me to Nevezhin.) And in the morning I was not taken out to work—I had been victorious. Two days passed and he appointed me—not a norm setter, but much higher—"works manager." In other words, I was senior to the work assigner—chief of all the brigadiers! I had got out of the frying pan into the fire! There had been no such post before I came there. That showed what a loyal dog I had looked to him to be! And what a one Nevezhin would have made of me too!

But once again my career fell through. God saved me: that

same week Nevezhin was removed from his post for stealing building materials. He had a very powerful personality, possessed an almost hypnotic stare, and he did not even have to raise his voice for the whole line-up to listen to him in trepidation. On grounds both of age—he was over fifty—and of camp experience and his own cruelty he ought long since to have been an NKVD general, and they said he had in fact already been a lieutenant colonel; however, he could not overcome his passion for stealing. He was never arrested because he was *one of their own*, but instead was merely removed from duty for a time and each time reduced in rank. And now he hadn't even been able to hold on to the rank of junior lieutenant either. Lieutenant Mironov, who replaced him, didn't have the patience to train anyone, and I myself could not get it into my head that what they wanted was for me to be a crushing hammer. Mironov turned out to be dissatisfied with me in every way, and he was even annoyed with and rejected my energetic reports:

"You don't even know how to write, you have a clumsy style." And he held out to me the report by Pavlov, the foreman: "Here's a man who knows how to write."

"On analyzation of certain facts of reduction of fulfillment of plan there is:

1. insufficient quantity of construction materials
2. because of incomplete supply with tools of the brigades
3. upon insufficient organization of work on the side of technical personnel
4. and also safety precautions are not being observed."

The value of this style was that the work management was to blame for everything and the camp administration . . . for nothing.

Incidentally, this Pavlov, a former tank officer (who still went around in his helmet), had a similar way of talking: "If you understand about love, then prove to me what's love."

(He was discussing a familiar subject: he was unanimously praised by the women who had been intimate with him. In camp this sort of thing is not kept very secret.)

The second week there I was demoted in disgrace to general work, and in my place they appointed that same Vasya Pavlov. Since I had not contested with him for the place and had not

resisted my ouster, he sent me out not with a shovel but with a painters' brigade.

The whole brief history of my leadership did, however, secure me an advantage in living conditions: as works manager I was housed in a special trusties' room, one of the two privileged rooms in the camp. And Pavlov was already living in the other such room, and when I was dismissed no worthy claimant turned up for my cot, and for several months I continued to live on there.

And at the time I valued only the better living conditions in this room: Instead of multiple bunks there were ordinary cots and one bed table for every two persons, not for a whole brigade. During the day the door was locked and you could leave your things there. Last, there was a half-legal electric hot plate, and it was not necessary to go and crowd around the big common stove in the yard. Slave of my oppressed and frightened body, I valued only this at the time.

But now, when I have an urge to write about my neighbors in that room, I realize what its principal advantage was: never again in my life, either through personal inclination or in the social labyrinth, would I get close to such people as Air Force General Belyayev and the MVD man Zinovyev, who, if not a general, was close to it.

I now know that a writer cannot afford to give in to feelings of rage, disgust, or contempt. Did you answer someone in a temper? If so, you didn't hear him out and lost track of his system of opinions. You avoided someone out of disgust—and a completely unknown personality slipped out of your ken—precisely the type you would have needed someday. But, however tardily, I nonetheless caught myself and realized I had always devoted my time and attention to people who fascinated me and were pleasant, who engaged my sympathy, and that as a result I was seeing society like the Moon, always from one side.

But just as the Moon, as it swings slightly back and forth ("libration"), shows us a portion of its dark side too—so that chamber of monstrosities disclosed people unknown to me.

Air Force Major General Aleksandr Ivanovich Belyayev (everyone in camp still called him "general") was invariably noticed by every new arrival on the first day in the first line-up. He stood out from the whole blackish-gray, lousy camp column,

not only in height and bearing, but because of his excellent leather coat, no doubt foreign-made, of a kind you would not see on the street in Moscow (the people who wore them ride about in automobiles) and even more because of his particular air of *non-presence*. Even without stirring in the camp column he was able to demonstrate that he had no relationship whatever to all that camp rabble swarming about him, that he would even die without realizing how he had come to be there. Stretched to his full height he looked over the heads of the mob, just as if he were reviewing a completely different parade which we could not see. And when the trooping out began and the guard at the gatehouse whacked a board across the backs of the zeks on the outside in the departing fives, Belyayev (in his brigade of work trusties) tried never to be the one on the end. If he did happen to get there, then he squeamishly shuddered and bent down as he went past the gatehouse, showing by his whole back how he held the gatehouse sentry in contempt. And the latter did not dare to touch him.

While I was still works manager, in other words an important chief, I became acquainted with the general in the following way: In the construction office where he was working as assistant norm setter I noticed that he was smoking, and I approached him to get a light from his cigarette. I politely asked his permission and had already bent over his desk in readiness. With a sharp gesture Belyayev jerked his cigarette from in front of mine, as though fearing I might infect it, got out an expensive chrome-plated lighter, and placed it down before me. It was easier for him to let me soil and spoil his lighter than to lower himself by holding his cigarette for me! I was embarrassed. And whenever anyone was impudent enough to ask him for a light from his cigarette he always placed his expensive lighter in front of him the same way, thus crushing him completely and dispelling any desire to approach him a second time. And if anyone managed to catch him at the very moment when he himself was lighting up with his lighter, and hastened to shove a cigarette toward him —he calmly blew out the lighter, closed its top, and placed it, like that, in front of the person approaching. This gave them to understand the whole magnitude of his sacrifice. And if there was no one else from whom to get a light, all the free foremen and prisoner brigadiers who swarmed in the office went outdoors in the courtyard to get one rather than to him.

Housed in the same room with him now, and with our cots in fact side by side, I was able to discover that squeamishness, disdain, and irritation were the principal feelings possessing him in his situation as a prisoner. Not only did he never go to the camp mess hall ("I don't even know where the door to it is!"), but he wouldn't let our neighbor Prokhorov bring him anything from the camp slops—except his bread ration. Was there any other zek in the Archipelago who could have so mocked his poor bread ration? Belyayev took it gingerly like a dirty toad—for, you see, it had been touched by hands and carried on wooden trays—and trimmed it with his knife on all *six* sides—cutting off both the crust and the dough as well. These six cut-off pieces he never gave to those who asked for them—to Prokhorov or the old-man orderly—but threw them in the slop bucket. Once I was even so bold as to ask him why he did not give them to Prokhorov. He proudly threw back his head, his white hair cropped very short (he wore his hair so short so that it would seem both a hair style and a camp haircut): "My cellmate at the Lubyanka once asked me: 'Please let me finish your soup!' I was nearly sick to my stomach! I . . . react very painfully to human humiliation!" He refused bread to the hungry so as not to humiliate them!

The general was able to preserve all this haughtiness with such ease because there was a trolleybus No. 4 stop near the gatehouse. Every day at 1 P.M. when we returned from the work compound to the residence compound for lunch, the general's wife would descend from a trolleybus at the outer gatehouse, bringing a hot meal in thermoses, cooked just an hour before in the general's kitchen at home. On weekdays they were not permitted to meet, and the thermoses were handed over by the turnkey. But on Sundays they spent half an hour together at the gatehouse. They said his wife always left in tears; Aleksandr Ivanovich took out on her everything that had accumulated in his proud and suffering soul in the course of a week.

Belyayev made one accurate observation: "In camp it is impossible to keep things or foodstuffs simply in a box or simply under lock and key. The box has to be a steel box and bolted to the floor." But from this there followed the conclusion: "Out of a hundred people in camp eighty are scoundrels!" (He didn't say ninety-five so as not to lose all his listeners.) "If I should

ever meet anyone from in here out in freedom and that person should rush up to me, I would say: 'You are insane! I have never met you before!' "

"How I suffer from barracks living!" he said. (This with only six people there!) "If only I could eat by myself, locked in alone!" Was he hinting that we ought to go out while he ate? He especially wanted to *eat* alone! Was it because what he ate today was incomparable with what others ate, or was it simply out of his own circle's established custom of hiding their bounty from the hungry?

On the other hand, he loved to talk with us, and it is highly unlikely that he would really have liked to be in a separate room. But the way he liked to talk was one-sided—loudly, self-confidently, and only about himself: "They offered *me* another camp with more comfortable conditions. . . ." (I can quite well picture that they do offer such as him a choice.) "That never happens to *me*." "Do you know, I . . ." "When I was in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan . . ." But nothing of any interest at all came after that, just some sort of nonsense to provide some kind of justification for that resounding introduction: "When I was in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan . . ."

He had really been around and seen sights. He was less than fifty and was still good and strong. There was just one strange thing: he was an Air Force major general, but he never talked about a single battle flight, not even one single flight. And yet, judging by his own account, he was the head of our Air Force purchasing mission in the United States during the war. America had evidently astonished him. And he managed to buy a lot there too. He never lowered himself to explain to us what precisely he had been arrested for, but evidently it was in connection with this American trip or his stories about it. "Otsep[6] proposed the path of complete confession.[7] But I said, 'I would rather have my term doubled, but I am guilty of nothing!' " One can readily believe that as far as the government was concerned he *was* innocent of any guilt; they gave him not a double but a half-term —five years, when even sixteen-year-old chatterboxes got more than that.

Looking at him and listening to him, I used to think: This is

6. A well-known Soviet lawyer.
7. In other words, he seconded the interrogator.

what he is like now! *After* the rough fingers had torn his shoulder boards off (I can just picture how he had cringed!), after the body searches, after the boxes, after the Black Marias, after "Hands behind your backs!"—he did not allow himself to be contradicted even in petty things, let alone in big things. (Big things he would not even have discussed with us, since we were unworthy, except for Zinovyev.) But not once did I ever see him absorb any thought he himself had not expressed. He was simply *incapable* of accepting any argument! He knew everything *before* we spoke! What had he been like earlier as head of the purchasing mission, a Soviet envoy to the West? A polished, white-faced, impenetrable sphinx, a symbol of the "New Russia," as they understood it in the West. What would it have been like to approach him with a request? Or to shove your head into his office with a request? How he would have barked! How he'd come down on you! It would have explained a lot if he had come from a long line of military men—but he hadn't. These Himalayas of self-assurance had been mastered by a Soviet general of the first generation. During the Civil War in the Red Army he was probably a young fellow in bast sandals who couldn't sign his name. How had all this come into being so swiftly? . . . He had always been in an elite circle—even aboard trains, even at resorts, always with those of his own group, behind the iron gates where entrance was permitted only with passes.

And what about the others? More likely to be like him than different. And what would happen if the truth that the "sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to 180 degrees" were to threaten their private residences, their ranks, their assignments abroad? In that case they would cut off your head for drawing a triangle! Triangular pediments would be knocked off all houses! A decree would be issued that angles henceforth were to be measured in radians!

And once again I thought: What about me? Why couldn't they have made the same sort of general out of me in the course of twenty years? Of course they could have.

And once again I looked closely: Aleksandr Ivanovich was not at all a bad chap. When he read Gogol he laughed warmly. And he used to make us all laugh when he was in a good mood. He had an intelligent laugh. If I had wanted to nourish hatred for him in myself—there when we were lying next to one another on

our cots—I could not have done it. The way was not closed for him to become a fully good person. But—only through suffering. Through suffering.

Pavel Nikolayevich Zinovyev didn't go to the camp mess hall either, and also would have liked to arrange things so that he had his meals brought to him in thermos jugs. It was a bitter pill to swallow to be left behind Belyayev, to turn out to be on a lower rung. But his circumstances were more difficult. Belyayev had not been punished by confiscation of his property, whereas Zinovyev had been subjected to partial confiscation. His money, his savings accounts had evidently all been hauled in and taken from him, and all that was left him was a good rich apartment. And how he used to love to talk about that apartment—time and time again, at great length, smacking his lips over every detail of the bath, realizing what enjoyment we must be getting from his story. He even had a saying of his own: After forty a man's value is determined by his apartment! (He used to recount all this in Belyayev's absence because Belyayev would not even have listened to him but would have started telling stories about himself instead, although not about his apartment, for he considered himself an intellectual, but perhaps about the Sudan again.) But according to Pavel Nikolayevich, his wife was ill and his daughter was obliged to work—and there was no one to bring him any thermoses. However, even the food parcels he received on Sundays were modest. And he was forced to bear his situation with the pride of an impoverished nobleman. Nonetheless he did not go to the mess hall, disdaining the filth there and the mass of chomping rabble, but he used to ask Prokhorov to bring both the gruel and the cereal to the room, where he warmed them up on the hot plate. He would willingly have cut six sides off the bread ration too, but he had no other bread, and he therefore limited himself to holding his bread ration over the hot plate, burning from all six sides the microbes implanted there by the hands of the bread-cutters and Prokhorov. He did not go to the mess hall and could even on occasion renounce his gruel, but he didn't have enough blue-blooded pride to restrain himself from petty begging in the room: "Could I just try a tiny piece? I haven't eaten any of that for a long time. . . ."

On the whole he was exaggeratedly gentle and polite—till

something rubbed him the wrong way. His politeness was particularly notable beside Belyayev's unnecessary rudeness. Inwardly restrained, outwardly restrained, with a deliberate way of chewing and cautious movements—he was the genuine Chekhov character "The Man in the Case." So true to life that there is no need to describe the rest of it, he was just as in Chekhov, except that he was not a schoolteacher, but an MVD general. It was impossible to use the electric hot plate even for a second during those minutes Pavel Nikolayevich had set aside for himself; beneath his snakelike stare you just jerked your mess tin off the hot plate immediately, and if you hadn't . . . he would have ticked you off pronto. During the lengthy Sunday daytime roll calls in the courtyard I used to try to take a book out with me (always about physics, keeping as far from literature as possible), and I hid behind the backs of those in front and read. Oh, what torments this violation of discipline gave Pavel Nikolayevich! You see, I was reading *in formation*, in sacred formation! And by doing this I was stressing my own challenge, flaunting my insolence. He didn't attack me directly, but stared at me in such a way, and squirmed in such torment, so groaned and grunted, that all the other trusties were sick of my reading too, so in the end I had to renounce my book, and stand there like an idiot for an hour at a time. (And you couldn't read in the room, you had to listen to the stories.) Once one of the girl bookkeepers from the construction office was late at line-up and thereby held up the departure of the trusty brigade to the work compound five minutes. And so, instead of being led out at the head of the column, our brigade was put at the end. There was nothing unusual about this and neither the work assigner nor the jailer even paid any attention, but Zinovyev in his special bluish-gray fine woolen overcoat, in his severely cocked visored cap, long since without its star, in spectacles, greeted the tardy woman with an angry snarl: "Why the devil are you late? We're standing here because of you!" (He just could not hold his tongue! He had grown utterly exasperated in the course of those five minutes! He had grown ill!) The girl turned on him sharply and with eyes glistening with pleasure told him off: "Apple polisher! Big nothing! Chichikov!" (Why Chichikov? She probably mixed him up with Belikov.) "Shut your trap!" And more and more and more, right to the borderline of the mother oaths. She managed everything with just her sharp agile tongue. She didn't lift a finger.

But it seemed as if she were invisibly whipping him across the cheeks, because spots, spots of red, flamed on his lusterless womanlike skin, and his ears blushed crimson and his lips twitched. He ruffled up but said nary another word and did not attempt to raise his hand in self-defense. That same day he complained to me: "What can I do with the *incorrigible directness* of my personality! It is my misfortune that even *here* I can't get away from discipline. I am *compelled* to utter reprimands; it disciplines those nearby."

He was always nervous at the morning line-up—he wanted to rush to work as quickly as possible. And hardly had the trusty brigade been let into the work compound than he very demonstratively overtook all those who were not hurrying, whose pace was leisurely, and almost ran into the office. Did he want the chiefs to observe him? Not very important. Was it so the zeks would see how intensely busy he was at his work? In part, yes. But the most important thing, the most sincere part, was to separate himself from the crowd as swiftly as possible, to get out of the camp compound, to hide himself in the quiet little planning section and once there . . . once there, certainly not to do the kind of work Vasily Vlasov did, trying to figure out how to rescue the working brigades, but instead, for whole hours at a time, to loaf, to smoke, to dream about one more amnesty, and to imagine another desk for himself, another office, with a buzzer to summon people, with several telephones, with servile secretaries, with visitors stiffly at attention.

Little we knew about him! He didn't like to speak of his MVD past—nor about his rank, his positions, or the nature of his work —the customary "reticence" of the former MVD men. But his greatcoat was, as it happens, that same sort of dark bluish-gray that is described by the authors of the book about the White Sea–Baltic Canal. And not even in camp did it occur to him to rip the sky-blue edgings off his tunic and his britches. During his two years' imprisonment he had evidently not had to encounter the real gaping maw of camp, to sniff the abyss of the Archipelago. Our camp had of course been assigned him by his choice: his apartment was just a few trolleybus stops from the camp, somewhere on Kaluga Square. And, not realizing the depths to which he had fallen, or just how hostile he was being to his present company, he sometimes let something drop in the room: One day he disclosed a close acquaintanceship with Krug-

lov (who at that time was not yet Minister of Internal Affairs), another with Frenkel, or with Zavenyagin, all big shots in Gulag. Once he recalled that during the war he had been in charge of construction on a large section of the Syzran-Saratov Railroad, and this meant he had been in Frenkel's GULZhDS. What did he mean—in charge? He was no engineer. Had he been chief of camp administration? Another darling Kleinmikhel?* And then, from those heights, he had painfully fallen almost to the level of an ordinary prisoner. He had been sentenced under Article 109, and in the MVD that meant that he had *taken* more than his rank permitted. They gave him seven years—*as one of their own.* That meant that he had grabbed off enough for a whole twenty. Under Stalin's amnesty they had already knocked off half of what remained, and he was therefore left with two years and a fraction. But he suffered—just as much as if he'd had the whole tenner.

The one and only window in our room looked out on the Neskuchny Park. Quite close to the window and just a bit below us the treetops rustled. Everything kept changing there: snowstorms, thaws, the first foliage. When Pavel Nikolayevich was not being irritated by anything inside and was only moderately sad, he would stand at the window, looking out at the park, and croon softly and pleasantly:

> Sleep deep, my heart!
> Don't awaken, don't arouse what used to be.

And there he was—a most agreeable person in a drawing room! But how many mass graves had he left along his section of the track!

The corner of the Neskuchny Park facing our compound was set off by hillocks from people strolling in the park and was secluded, or would have been, if you did not count our shaven heads peering out of windows. On May 1 some lieutenant brought to this hiding place his girl, who was wearing a bright-colored dress. Here they were concealed from the rest of the park, but they paid no more heed to us than to the stare of a dog or a cat. The officer laid his girl right there on the grass, and she was not shy either.

> Do not call back what has dashed off afar,
> Do not love what you used to love.

On the whole our room was a model room. The MVD man and the general ran us. We could make use of the hot plate only with their permission (it was a *people's* hot plate) when they were not using it themselves. They alone decided whether the room should be ventilated or not, where to put our shoes, where to hang trousers, when to stop talking, when to go to sleep, when to wake up. Several steps down the corridor was the door to the big barracks room where a republic led its stormy life, where they kept sending all authorities "up the mouth," "up the nose," etc. But here we had privileges, and in clinging to them, we also had to observe all the legalities. Having been booted into the insignificant painters' brigade I had no say: I had become a proletarian and at any moment they might cast me out into the common barracks. The peasant Prokhorov, even though he was considered the "brigadier" of the work trusties, had been appointed to that position chiefly to act as servant—to carry bread and mess tins, to communicate with the jailers and the barracks orderlies, in a word to perform all the dirty work (it was this very same peasant who had fed the two generals).* And so it was that we were compelled to submit to our dictators. But where was the great Russian intelligentsia and what was it looking at?

Dr. Pravdin* (and I did not invent the name either) was a neuropathologist and the camp physician. He was seventy. This meant that the Revolution had arrived when he was already in his forties, that he had come to full maturity during the best period of Russian thought, in the spirit of conscientiousness, honor, and reverence for the common people. And what an appearance! An enormous venerable head with silvery flopping gray hair which the camp clippers did not dare to touch (a special privilege from the chief of the Medical Section). His portrait would have embellished the finest medical journal in the world! Any country would have been honored to have such a minister of health! His big nose, which knew its own value, inspired total confidence in his diagnoses. His movements were all dignified. He was so capacious a doctor that he hardly fitted on a single metal cot and hung over the sides.

I don't know how good a neuropathologist he was. It is quite possible he could have been a good one, but only in a mellow, well-mannered epoch, and most certainly not in a government hospital, but at his own house, behind his brass nameplate on an oaken door, to the melodic chiming of a grandfather clock against

the wall, and not subordinate to anything except his own conscience. However, he had been thoroughly frightened since then —frightened enough to last the rest of his life. I don't know whether he had ever been imprisoned before, whether perhaps he had been hauled out to be shot during the Civil War (this would not have been surprising). But even without a revolver at his head he had been frightened enough. It was enough to have had to work in outpatient departments where they had demanded he see nine patients an hour, where there was only enough time to tap for a knee jerk with a rubber mallet; and to have been a member of an Experts' Commission on Workmen's Disabilities (VTEK), and a member of a Health Resort Commission, and a member of a military conscription board, with papers everywhere to sign, sign, sign, and to know that your head was at stake with every signature, that some doctors had already been arrested, others threatened, and you still had to keep signing medical certificates, and diagnoses and expert testimony, and medical attestations and histories of illnesses, and every single signature involved a Hamlet-like soul-searching as to whether a given patient should be freed from work or not, whether he was suitable for service or not, whether he was sick or healthy. Sick people implored you in one direction and the bosses pulled you in the other, and the frightened doctor would lose his presence of mind, become a prey to doubt and trepidation, and then remorse.

But all that was out in freedom, those were sweet nothings! In here, arrested as an enemy of the people, so terrified by the interrogator that he was ready to die of a heart attack (I can imagine how many people, a whole medical institute, no doubt, he may have dragged there with him in such a state of terror!) —what was he now? An ordinary scheduled visit of the free chief of the Medical Section of the camp, an old toper with no medical education, put Pravdin into such a condition of nervousness and total confusion that he was quite incapable of reading the Russian texts on the hospital cards. His doubts now multiplied by ten. In camp he was simply in such a state he didn't know whether a prisoner could be freed from work with a temperature of 99.86 degrees or not. What if they dressed him down? And he would come to our room to get our advice. He could maintain a calm equilibrium no longer than a day at a time—

one day after he had been praised by the camp chief or even a junior jailer. As a result of this praise he somehow felt himself safe for the next twenty-four hours. But the next morning he was again overtaken by a sense of implacable alarm. One day an extremely urgent prisoner transport was dispatched from the camp and they were in such a hurry that there was no time to arrange for baths. (It was fortunate they didn't simply drive them naked into the icy spray.) The senior jailer came to Pravdin and ordered him to sign a certificate to the effect that the transported prisoners had undergone hygienic processing. Pravdin, as always, obeyed the orders—but you should have seen him afterward! Coming to the room, he sank onto his cot like someone in a state of collapse. He clutched at his heart, he groaned, and would not listen to our reassurances. We went to sleep. He smoked one cigarette after another, ran back and forth to the toilet, and finally, after midnight, dressed himself, and with the look of a madman went to the duty jailer whose nickname was Shorty—an illiterate pithecanthropus, but with a star on his forage cap—to ask his advice: What would happen to him now? Would they or would they not give him a second term under Article 58 for this crime? Or would they only send him away from his Moscow camp to a far-distant one? (His family was in Moscow and used to bring him rich parcels, so he clung to our minicamp for all he was worth.)

Intimidated and frightened, Pravdin lost his will to do anything, even in preventive hygiene. He was totally unable to make demands on the cooks or the barracks orderlies or even his own Medical Section. It was dirty in the mess hall, in the kitchen the bowls were badly washed, and in the Medical Section itself it was never clear whether the blankets were ever shaken out. He knew all this, but was incapable of insisting on cleanliness. There was only one fetish which he shared with the whole camp administration (it was a whim known to many camps)—the daily washing down of the floors in the residence quarters. This was carried out without fail. The air and the cots never dried out because of the eternally wet and rotting floors. Pravdin was regarded without respect by even the lowliest last-legger in the camp. Throughout his prison career he was left unplundered and uncheated only by those who didn't feel like bothering. Only because our room was locked up all night did his things, scattered

about his bed, remain intact, and his night table, the most disorderly in the camp, from which everything kept falling onto the floor, remain unplundered.

Pravdin had been imprisoned for eight years under Articles 58-10 and 58-11, in other words as a political propagandist and organizer, but I discovered in him the naïveté of a backward child! Even in his third year of imprisonment he had still not matured to the level of the thoughts he had confessed to at his interrogation. He believed we had all been imprisoned only temporarily, as a kind of joke, and that a magnificent and generous amnesty was being prepared so that we would value freedom all the more and be eternally grateful to the Organs for this lesson. He believed in the prosperity of the collective farms, in the infamous perfidy of the Marshall Plan for enslaving Europe, and in the intrigues of the Allies striving to start a third world war.

I remember that he came in radiant one day, shining with that quiet, benevolent happiness that believers return with after a good vespers. Set in his large, good-natured, open face, his always prominent eyes, with sagging lower lids, were all aglow with an unearthly meekness. It turned out that a meeting of the camp compound trusties had just taken place. The camp chief had first shouted at them and banged his fist, but then all of a sudden had calmed down and said that he trusted them *as his loyal assistants!* And Pravdin touchingly confided in us: "I got back all my enthusiasm for our work after those words!" (To give the general his due, he made a contemptuous grimace.)

The doctor's name did not lie: he was truth-loving and loved truth. He loved it, but he was unworthy of it!

In our tiny model he was merely amusing. But if one moves from this tiny model to the larger scale, it's enough to make your blood run cold. What proportion, what percentage, of our *spiritual* Russia has come to this? Purely as a result of fear . . .

Pravdin had grown up in a cultured milieu, and all his life he had been occupied with mental work; he had been surrounded by intellectually sophisticated people—but was he really an *intellectual*, in other words a person with an individual *intellect* of his own?

Over the years I have had much occasion to ponder this word, the *intelligentsia*. We are all very fond of including ourselves in it—but you see not all of us belong. In the Soviet Union this

word has acquired a completely distorted meaning. They began to classify among the intelligentsia all those who don't work (and are afraid to) with their hands. All the Party, government, military, and trade-union bureaucrats have been included. All bookkeepers and accountants—the mechanical slaves of Debit. All office employees. And with even greater ease we include here *all* teachers (even those who are no more than talking textbooks and have neither independent knowledge nor an independent view of education). *All* physicians, including those capable only of making doodles on the patients' case histories. And without the slightest hesitation all those who are only in the vicinity of editorial offices, publishing houses, cinema studios, and philharmonic orchestras are included here, not even to mention those who actually get published, make films, or pull a fiddle bow.

And yet the truth is that not one of these criteria permits a person to be classified in the intelligentsia. If we do not want to lose this concept, we must not devalue it. The intellectual is not defined by professional pursuit and type of occupation. Nor are good upbringing and a good family enough in themselves to produce an intellectual. An intellectual is a person whose interests in and preoccupation with the spiritual side of life are insistent and constant and not forced by external circumstances, even flying in the face of them. An intellectual is a person whose thought is nonimitative.

In our chamber of monstrosities the leading intellectuals were considered to be Belyayev and Zinovyev; and as for the foreman Orachevsky and the stock clerk and toolmaker, the coarse, uncultured fellow Prokhorov, their presence offended the feelings of these highly placed people; and during the period when I was prime minister, the general and the MVD man both managed to appeal to me, trying to persuade me to toss both these peasants out of our room—because of their slovenliness, their way of lying down on their cots in their boots, and in general for their lack of intellectual qualities. (The generals were giving thought to getting rid of the peasant who fed them!) But, in fact, I liked them both—I myself am a peasant at heart. And so a balance was established in the room. (And very soon no doubt the generals spoke to someone about me—trying to have me thrown out as well.)

– Orachevsky really did have a coarse exterior and there was

nothing "intellectual" about him. In music he understood nothing but Ukrainian songs. He had never heard anything at all of ancient Italian painting nor of modern French painting. Whether he loved books I couldn't say because we had none in the camp. He never intervened in the abstract arguments which used to start up in the room. He seemed not even to hear Belyayev's best monologues on the subject of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Zinovyev's on his apartment. During his free time he preferred to brood for long periods in gloomy silence, with his feet placed on the rail at the foot of the cot, the heels of his boots on the rail itself, their soles aimed at the generals. (Not out of a desire to taunt, but because in getting ready for line-up, or in the lunch interval or in the evening, if one expects to go out again, how could any reasonable person renounce the satisfaction of lying down for a moment? And it was a lot of fuss to take boots off—they had been pulled tightly over two sets of footcloths.) Orachevsky also failed to react to the doctor's self-torments and doubts. And then suddenly, after having been silent an hour or two, he might, quite regardless of what was going on in the room at that time, declare tragically: "Yes! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a 58 to get out of jail." On the other hand, in practical arguments, on the attributes of everyday objects, or on correct conduct in everyday life, he might mobilize all his Ukrainian stubbornness to assert and prove with great passion that felt boots—valenki—spoil from being dried out on the stove, and that it was better and pleasanter to wear them the whole winter without drying them out. So, of course, what kind of intellectual could he be!

But he alone of all of us was sincerely devoted to the construction project, he alone could speak with interest about it in nonworking time. Learning that the zeks had managed to break down the partitions between rooms that were already completely installed and use them for firewood, he seized his rough head with his rude hands and rocked back and forth as if in pain. He could not comprehend the natives' barbarity! Perhaps because he had been in prison for only one year. Someone came and said that they had dropped a concrete block from the eighth floor. Everyone exclaimed: "Did it kill anyone?" But Orachevsky said: "Did you see *how* it broke? What directions did the cracks run in?" (The slabs had been cast according to his draw-

ings, and what he wanted to know was whether he had put the reinforcing rods in the right places.) In the severe December cold the brigadiers and the foremen had gathered in the office one day to warm themselves and recount assorted camp gossip. Orachevsky came in, took off a mitten, and triumphantly and with great care emptied from it onto the desk an unmoving but still living orange and black beauty of a butterfly. "Now that's a butterfly for you—to survive a frost like that at five below! She was sitting on one of the rafters."

Everyone gathered around the butterfly and all fell silent. Those of us who proved fortunate enough to survive would be unlikely to end our terms with any more liveliness in them than that butterfly.

Orachevsky had been given only five years. He had been imprisoned for a *facial crime* (really out of Orwell)—for a *smile!* He had been an instructor in a field engineers' school. While showing another teacher in the classroom something in *Pravda*, he had smiled! The other teacher was killed soon after, so no one ever found out *what* Orachevsky had been smiling at. But the smile *had been observed*, and the fact of smiling at the central organ of the Party was in itself sacrilege! Then Orachevsky was invited to make a political report. He replied that he would carry out the order but he would be making the report without enthusiasm. This had filled the cup to overflowing!

Now which of the two—Pravdin or Orachevsky—was the closer to being an *intellectual?*

And there is no getting around speaking of Prokhorov here. He was a portly peasant, heavy-footed, with a heavy stare, and not much friendliness in his face, for he only smiled after thinking something through. In the Archipelago men like that are called "gray wolf." He had no inclination to make any concessions of his own or to do good to anyone. But what I liked about him right off was this: In bringing Zinovyev his mess tins and Belyayev his bread Prokhorov was not servile, with a false smile or even an empty word. Somehow he delivered these things majestically and with reserve, showing thereby that service was service but that he was no mere boy. To feed his big worker's body he had to have a lot to eat. For the sake of the general's gruel and grits he was willing to suffer his humiliating position

in silence; knowing that they despised him there, he did not answer them rudely, but neither did he go running off in a flurry of haste for them "on tiptoe."[8] He could see through all of us, every last one of us he could see through, as if we were naked, but the occasion never did arise for him to speak his mind. I felt about Prokhorov that he was founded on bedrock, that much in our people rests on shoulders like his. He was in no hurry to smile at anyone; his gaze was sullen; but he never snapped at anyone's heels either.

He had not been imprisoned under Article 58, but he understood the facts of life from beginning to end. For many years he had been the chairman of a village soviet near Naro-Fominsk. In that kind of job one also had to know how to twist and turn, and be cruel, and stand one's ground against the higher-ups. Here is how he described his work as chairman:

"To be a patriot means always to be out in the lead. And it is obvious that you are going to be the first to run into all kinds of trouble. You make a report to the village soviet, and even though village talk for the most part *comes down to material things*, nonetheless some long-beard lets fly: 'What's permanent revolution?' The devil take it, whatever it is, I know that city women wear permanents, and if you don't answer him, they'll say: 'You've stuck your pig's snout where it doesn't belong.' And so I say that it is a kind of revolution that twists and turns and can't be held in the hand—go to the city and look at the women's curls, or on a sheep. And when our people started cursing out MacDonald, I corrected the authorities in my report: 'And you, comrades,' I said, 'would do better to step less on other dogs' tails!' "

Over the years he had become familiar with all the window dressing of our life, and had himself participated. He summoned the collective farm chairman one day and said: "Get one milkmaid ready for a gold medal at the agricultural fair—with a daily milking record of sixty liters!" And in the whole collective they collaborated to turn out such a milkmaid, they filled her cow's manger with high-protein feeds and even sugar. And the whole village and the whole collective farm knew what that agricultural fair was worth. But up above they were playacting, kidding themselves—which means this was what they wanted.

When the front approached Naro-Fominsk, Prokhorov was

8. This expression "on tiptoe"—"na tsyrlakh"—is explained in Chapter 19.

entrusted with evacuating the village soviet's cattle. But this measure, when you get down to it, was aimed not at the Germans but against the peasants themselves; they were the ones left behind on the bare earth without cattle or tractors. The peasants didn't want to hand their cattle over and fought back. (They were hoping the collective farms would fall apart and the cattle would then come to them.) And they nearly killed Prokhorov.

The front rolled past their village—and settled down for the whole winter. An artilleryman from way back in 1914, Prokhorov, without cattle and as a last resort, joined up with a Soviet artillery battery and carried shells until they drove him away. In the spring of 1942 Soviet power returned to their district and Prokhorov again became the chairman of the village soviet. By now he had acquired the full power to settle accounts with his enemies and to become a worse cur than before. And he would have prospered to this day. But—strangely—he did not. His heart had been shaken.

Their locality was desolated, and they gave the chairman bread coupons: to provide a bit from the bakery for those whose homes had burned down and those who were close to starvation. Prokhorov, however, began to take pity on the people, and disobeyed orders by overspending coupons, and got imprisoned under the law of "Seven-eighths"—for ten years. They had forgiven him MacDonald because of his lack of learning, but they did not forgive him human mercy.

Prokhorov, too, liked to lie there in the room for hours at a time, just like Orachevsky, with his boots on the foot rail of his cot, looking at the peeling ceiling. He only spoke up when the generals weren't present. I was fascinated by some of his judgments and expressions:

"What kind of line is harder to draw—one straight or one crooked? For a straight line you have to have instruments, while even a drunk can draw a crooked line with his foot. So it is with the line of life."

"Money—nowadays has *two stories*." (How apt that was! Prokhorov was referring to the way foodstuffs were bought from the collective farm at one price and sold to people at quite a different price. But he saw this on a broader plane too. The "two stories" of money are apparent in many areas; this permeates our whole life. The state pays us money on the first floor, and we have to pay out money everywhere on the second floor, and what

that means is that we ourselves also have to collect somewhere on the second floor, since otherwise you'd go quickly bust.)

"A human being is not a devil, but he won't let you live," was another of his proverbs.

And there was much else in the same spirit, and I very much regret that I failed to preserve it all.

I called this room a chamber of monstrosities, but I could not have classified either Prokhorov or Orachevsky as a monstrosity. However, out of six there was a majority of monstrosities because what was I myself if not a monstrosity? Scraps and snatches of tangled-up beliefs, false hopes, and imaginary convictions still floated about in my head, even though they were already tattered and torn. And though I was already entering on the second year of my term, I still did not understand the finger of fate, nor what it was pointing out to me, thrust out there onto the Archipelago. I was still under the influence of the first superficial and corrupting thought instilled in me by that special-assignment prisoner at Krasnaya Presnya: "Just don't get into general work! Survive!" Inward development in the direction of general work came to me with great difficulty.

One night a passenger car came to the gatehouse, and a jailer entered our room, shook General Belyayev by the shoulder, and ordered him to accompany him "with his things." They led out the general, who was still dazed from having been suddenly awakened. He managed to send us a note from the Butyrki: "Don't lose heart!" (Evidently he meant because of his departure.) "If I am alive, I will write." (He did not write, but we found out about him elsewhere. They evidently considered him dangerous in a Moscow camp. He was sent to Potma. There were no thermos jugs with homemade soup there, and I rather imagine he no longer cut off the outside of his bread ration on six sides. And half a year later we heard rumors that he had sunk very low in Potma, that he was distributing gruel so as to get a sip now and then. I do not know whether this is true. As they say in camp: I sell it to you for what I paid for it.)

And so, losing no time, the very next morning I got myself the job of assistant norm setter in the general's place, still without having learned painting. But I didn't learn norm setting either, but only multiplied and divided to my heart's content. In the course of my new work I had occasion to go roaming about the whole construction site and time to sit on the ceiling of the eighth

floor of our building, in other words, as if on the roof. And from there we prisoners had a panoramic view of Moscow.

On one side were the Sparrow Hills,* still open and clear. The future Lenin Prospekt had just been projected and outlined but did not exist. The insane asylum—"Kanatchikova dacha"—could be seen in its pristine, original state. In the opposite direction were the cupola of the Novodevichi Monastery, the carcass of the Frunze Academy, and in a violet haze far, far ahead, beyond the bustling streets, was the Kremlin, where all they had to do was merely sign that amnesty which had already been prepared for us. We, the doomed, were tempted by the sight of this world which in its riches and glory was virtually at our feet, yet at the same time forever unattainable.

But no matter how much of a greenhorn I was in champing at the bit to be out "in freedom," this city did not arouse in me envy or the wish to soar down onto its streets. All the evil holding us prisoner had been woven here. This arrogant city had never before provided such a justification as it did now after the war for the saying:

"Moscow turns its back on tears!"[9]

9. And now, from time to time, I take advantage of this opportunity—so rare for a former zek—to visit *his own* camp. Each time I am excited and nervous. It is so useful for measuring the relative dimensions of life—to immerse oneself in the inescapable past, to feel again *what one was before*. Where the mess hall, the stage, and the Cultural and Educational Section were before, the "Spartak Store" is now. Right there at the surviving trolleybus stop was the external gatehouse. Right there on the third floor is the window of our chamber of monstrosities. Right there was the line-up line. Right there Napolnaya's turret crane used to rise. Over there was where M. flitted over to Bershader. Along the asphalt courtyard people walk, promenade, talk about petty things. They do not know they are walking on corpses, on our recollections. They could not imagine that this courtyard might once have not been part of Moscow, twenty minutes' drive from the center, but a tiny islet of the savage Archipelago, more closely tied to Norilsk and the Kolyma than to Moscow. But I cannot now go up on the roof where we used to go freely and I cannot now enter those apartments in which I used to putty doors and lay floors. I put my hands behind my back as I used to do and I pace back and forth in the compound, imagining that I cannot leave here, that I can pace only from here to there and back again, and that I do not know where they will send me tomorrow. And those same trees in the Neskuchny Park, no longer fenced off by the compound fence, testify to me that they remember it all, that they remember me too, and that that is really how it was.

I pace in a prisoner's straight back-and-forth, with turns at each end, and as I do so all the complexities of life today gradually begin to melt away like wax.

I cannot restrain myself, I play the hooligan: I climb up the stairs and on a white windowsill, half a flight below the office of the camp chief, I write in black: "Camp Sector 121." People will pass this way and read it—and perhaps they will ponder it.

■

Although we were trusties, we were work trusties and our room wasn't the main room—up above us there was another one just like it where the compound trusties lived, and whence the triumvirate of the bookkeeper Solomonov, the stock clerk Bershader, and the work assigner Burshtein ruled our camp. Right there the reorganization was decided on: Pavlov to be removed from his position as works manager and replaced by K. And so one day this new prime minister came to live in our room. (And just before that Pravdin, despite all his attempts to curry favor, had been *hauled off* on a prisoner transport.) They didn't suffer me around much longer; they kicked me out of norm-setting work and out of that room as well. (In camp when you fall in social position, you rise to the upper level on a multiple bunk.) But while I was still there I had time to observe K., who filled out our small "model" not at all badly with one additional important postrevolutionary variety of the intellectual.

Aleksandr Fyodorovich K., a thirty-five-year-old calculating and grasping businessman (in other words, "a brilliant organizer"), was a construction engineer by profession. (But somehow he showed very little professional skill and merely fussed about with a slide rule.) He had received ten years under the terms of the law of August 7, had already served three years, had thoroughly oriented himself in camp, and felt himself as free and easy here as out in freedom. It was as if general work did not threaten him in the least. All the less, therefore, was he inclined to take pity on the untalented masses doomed precisely to this general work. He was one of those prisoners whose actions put more fear into the zeks than the actions of the Archipelago's inveterate bosses; once he had grabbed you by the throat he would never let go or relax his grip. He got reduction of rations (by increasing the differentials), deprivation of visits from relatives, and dispatch of more prisoners out on transports—anything to squeeze more out of the prisoners. Both the camp and the construction were equally delighted with him.

But here was what was interesting: All those devices were clearly and obviously methods predating camp. That is how he had learned *to lead* out in freedom, and it turned out that his method of leadership was exactly what was wanted in the camps.

Similarities aid cognition. I soon noticed that K. reminded me very much of someone else. Of whom? Of Leonid Z——v, my Lubyanka cellmate! Not at all primarily in external appearance, not at all, for Z. had been boarlike, and K. was tall, slim, and gentlemanly. But, juxtaposed, they enabled me to perceive through them a whole generation—that first wave of the *new* engineers who had been awaited impatiently so that the old "spetsy"—specialists—could be thrown out of their jobs and be, many of them, repressed. And they had arrived, first graduates of the new Soviet higher technical education institutions! As engineers they could not hold a candle to the engineers of the older generation—either in the breadth of their technical education or in their artistic sensitivity and love for their work. (Even in comparison with the bear Orachevsky, evicted from the room right off, the resplendent K. immediately turned out to be an empty chatterbox.) As claimants to a general culture they were comic. (K. said: "My favorite work is *Three Colors of Time* by Stendhal."* Though dealing hesitantly with the integral x^2dx, he plunged right into arguments with me on any question of higher mathematics. He had memorized five to ten school phrases in German, and used them whether they were appropriate or not. He did not know English at all, but stubbornly argued about correct English pronunciation, which he had once heard in a restaurant. He had a notebook with aphorisms. He often used to browse through it and learn phrases by heart, so as to be able to shine on the right occasion.)

But despite all this, one would have expected from them, who had never seen the capitalist past, who had been in no possible way infected by its ulcers, a republican purity, *our own* Soviet fidelity to principles. Many of them had received high positions and very high salaries straight from the school desk; and during the war the Motherland had excused them from the front and had demanded nothing in return beyond the use of their professional skills. And because of this they were patriots, though they joined the Party with no enthusiasm. What they had never experienced was the fear of class-based accusations, and therefore they were not afraid of overstepping in their decisions, and on occasion they defended these decisions by shouting. For the same reason they were not shy in the face of the working masses and, on the contrary, they kept a common cruel, resolute grip on them.

And that was all. And in accordance with their possibilities

they tried to keep their working day limited to eight hours. And afterward the cup of life began: actresses, the Hotel Metropole, the Hotel Savoy. And from here on the stories of K. and Z. were astonishingly alike. Here is K's account of an ordinary Sunday in the summer of 1943 (not without exaggeration, but in the main correct, and you believed him right off too!). Telling us about it he grew quite radiant.

"Saturday evening we used to roll off to the Prague Restaurant. Dinner! Do you understand what *dinner* is for a woman? For a woman it is absolutely unimportant what she had for breakfast or luncheon or what kind of work she does during the day. What's important for her is: her dress, her shoes, and her dinner! At the Prague there was a blackout, but you could go up on the roof anyway. There was a balustrade! The aromatic summer air! The Arbat down below, sleepy and blacked out. Next to you a woman in a *silk* [he would always stress that word] dress. We have caroused the whole night long. And now we are drinking only champagne! From behind the spires of the Defense Ministry a crimson sun floats up! Sunlight, windowpanes, roofs! We pay the bill. My personal car waits at the exit. It had been summoned by phone! The wind pours through the open car windows and refreshes us. At the dacha, the pine woods! Do you understand what a pine forest is like in the morning? Several hours of sleep behind closed shutters. We wake about ten—with the sun trying to break in through the Venetian blinds. All around the room is the lovely disorder of women's clothes. A light breakfast (do you understand what *light* means?) with red wine on the veranda. And then friends drop in—the river, sunning, bathing. And in the evening off by car to our respective homes. If it is a working Sunday, then after breakfast round about eleven you have to go off to give a few orders."

Now can the two of us ever, *ever* understand each other?

He sits there on my cot and tells his story, waving his hands for greater accuracy in the entrancing details, twisting his head in the burning voluptuousness of recollection. And I remember one after another those fearsome Sundays of the summer of 1943.

July 4. At dawn the whole earth shook to the left of us on the Kursk arc. And the crimson sun provided the light for us to read the falling leaflets: "Surrender! You have more than once experienced the crushing strength of the German attacks."

July 11. At dawn thousands of whistles cut through the air above us—our own attack on Orel has begun.

"A light breakfast?" Of course I understand. It is still dark in the trenches, and one can of American pork stew for eight men, and then—"Hurrah! For the Motherland! For Stalin!" and over the top.

Chapter 10

■

In Place of Politicals

But in that grim world where everyone gnawed up whomever he could, where a human's life and conscience were bought for a ration of soggy bread—in that world who and where were *the politicals*, bearers of the honor and the torch of all the prison populations of history?

We have already traced how the original "politicals" were divided, stifled, and exterminated.

And in their place?

Well—what did take their place? Since then we have had no politicals. And we could not possibly have any. What kind of "politicals" could we have if universal justice had been established? Once upon a time in the Tsarist prisons we put to good use the special privileges of the politicals, and, as a result, came to realize all the more clearly that they had to be abolished. They simply . . . abolished the politicals. There are none, and there won't be any.

And as for those who were imprisoned, well, they were *KR*'s, enemies of the Revolution. As the years passed, the word "revolution" itself faded. Very well then, let them be "enemies of the people." That sounded even better. (If, basing ourselves on our review of the Waves, we count the numbers imprisoned under this article, and add three times that number for the members of their families—banished, suspected, humiliated, and persecuted—then we shall be forced to admit to our astonishment that for the first time in history the *people* had become *its own enemy*, though in return it acquired the best of friends—the secret police.)

There is a famous camp anecdote about a sentenced woman who for a long time could not get through her head why the prosecutor and judge at her trial had kept calling her "konny militsioner" (a mounted policeman), which was what she understood of "kontr-revolyutsioner" (a counterrevolutionary)! As one who has served time in camps and looked about, I can see this anecdote as fact.

A tailor laying aside his needle stuck it into a newspaper on the wall so it wouldn't get lost and happened to stick it in the eye of a portrait of Kaganovich. A customer observed this: Article 58, ten years (terrorism).

A saleswoman accepting merchandise from a forwarder noted it down on a sheet of newspaper. There was no other paper. The number of pieces of soap happened to fall on the forehead of Comrade Stalin. Article 58, ten years.

A tractor driver of the Znamenka Machinery and Tractor Station lined his thin shoes for warmth with a pamphlet about the candidate for elections to the Supreme Soviet, but a charwoman noticed it was missing (she was responsible for the leaflets) and found out who had it. KRA—Counter-Revolutionary Agitation—ten years.

The village club manager went with his watchman to buy a bust of Comrade Stalin. They bought it. The bust was big and heavy. They ought to have carried it in a hand barrow, both of them together, but the manager's status did not allow him to. "All right, you'll manage it if you take it slowly." And he went off ahead. The old watchman couldn't work out how to do it for a long time. If he tried to carry it at his side, he couldn't get his arm around it. If he tried to carry it in front of him, his back hurt and he was thrown off balance backward. Finally he figured out how to do it. He took off his belt, made a noose for Comrade Stalin, put it around his neck, and in this way carried it over his shoulder through the village. Well, there was nothing here to argue about. It was an open-and-shut case. Article 58-8, terrorism, ten years.

A sailor sold an Englishman a "Katyusha" cigarette lighter—a wick in a piece of pipe with a striking wheel—as a souvenir for one pound sterling. Subversion of the Motherland's dignity—58, ten years.

A shepherd in a fit of anger swore at a cow for not obeying: "You collective-farm wh——!" And he got 58, and a term.

Ellochka Svirskaya sang a ditty at an amateur concert which just barely *touched on* something sensitive. And this was open rebellion! 58, ten years.

A *deaf and dumb* carpenter got a term for counterrevolutionary *agitation!* How? He was laying floors in a club. Everything had been removed from a big hall, and there was no nail or hook anywhere. While he was working, he hung his jacket and his service cap on a bust of Lenin. Someone came in and saw it. 58, ten years.

How many of them there were in Volgolag before the war—illiterate old villagers from Tula, Kaluga, and Smolensk provinces. They all had Article 58-10, in other words, anti-Soviet propaganda. Because, when they had to sign, they made their mark with a cross. (This is Loshchilin's story.)

After the war I did time in camp with a man from Vetluga named Maksimov. He had served from the beginning of the war in an antiaircraft battery. During the winter their political commissar had assembled them to discuss with them the *Pravda* lead editorial of January 16, 1942: "During the winter we must smash the German so badly that in the spring he will not be able to rise again." He assigned Maksimov to speak on this topic too. The latter said: "That's right! We have to drive him out, the bastard, while the storms are raging, while he has no felt boots, even though we ourselves have ordinary shoes on now and then. But in the spring it's going to be worse because of his equipment." And the political commissar applauded as if everything was all right. But then Maksimov was summoned to SMERSH and had eight years tied on him for . . . "praising German equipment," 58. (And Maksimov's education had been one year at a village school. His son, a Komsomol member, came to camp from the army, and ordered him: "Don't write Mother you're arrested. Say you're in the army and they won't let you go." His wife wrote back to the P.O. box address: "Your class has all been released; why don't they let you go?" And the convoy guard looked at Maksimov, who was always unshaven and crestfallen, and a bit deaf in addition, and advised him: "So write that you've become an officer and that's why they are keeping you." Someone at the construction site once got angry at Maksimov for his deafness and stupidity, and cursed him out: "*They spoiled Article 58 with you!*")

The children in a collective farm club got out of hand, had a fight, and accidentally knocked some poster or other off the wall with their backs. The two eldest were sentenced under Article 58.

(On the basis of the Decree of 1935, children from the age of twelve on had full criminal responsibility for all crimes!) They also sentenced the parents for having allegedly told them to and sent them to do it.

A sixteen-year-old Chuvash schoolboy made a mistake in Russian in a slogan in the wall newspaper; it was not his native language. Article 58, five years.

And in a state farm bookkeeping office the slogan hung: "Life has become better; life has become more gay. (Stalin)" And someone added a letter in red pencil to Stalin's name, making the slogan read as though life had become more gay *for* Stalin. They didn't look for the guilty party—but sentenced the entire bookkeeping office.

Gesel Bernshtein and his wife, Besschastnaya, were sentenced to five years under 58-10 for holding . . . a spiritualist séance at home! The interrogator kept asking: *"Who* else *was in on it?"*[1]

Nonsensical? Fantastic? Senseless? It's not at all meaningless. For that is just exactly what "terror as a means of persuasion" is. There is a proverb: "Beat the crow and beat the raven—and in the end you'll get to the white swan!" Just keep beating one after another—and in the end you'll hit the one you need. The primary meaning of mass terror lies precisely in this: even the strong and well hidden who could never be ferreted out simply will be caught and perish.

And what absurd accusations weren't manufactured in order to provide a foundation for the arrest of random or marked individuals!

The charge against Grigory Yefimovich Generalov, from Smolensk Province, was that he "used to drink heavily because he hated the Soviet government." (And actually he used to drink heavily because he and his wife got along badly.) He got eight years.

Irina Tuchinskaya (the fiancée of Sofronitsky's son) was arrested while leaving church. (The intention was to arrest their whole family.) And she was charged with having "prayed in church for the death of Stalin." (Who could have heard that prayer?!) Terrorism! Twenty-five years!

Aleksandr Babich was accused of "having in 1916 acted

1. There was a rumor in camp that Gesel had been imprisoned for "fortune-telling"—and the trusties used to bring him bread and tobacco and say: "Tell my fortune too!"

against the Soviet government [!!] while serving in the Turkish army." (In actual fact he had been a Russian volunteer on the Turkish front.) And he was additionally charged with the intent of turning over to the Germans in 1941 the icebreaker *Sadko*—on which he was a passenger. And the sentence was: to be shot! (They replaced it with a ten-ruble bill and he died in camp.)

Sergei Stepanovich Fyodorov, an artillery engineer, was charged with "wrecking by slowing down the projects of young engineers." (You see, these Komsomol activists do not have any leisure time in which to complete their drawings.)[2]

Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences Ignatovsky was arrested in Leningrad in 1941 and accused of having been recruited by the German intelligence service when he was working for Zeiss in 1908! And he was supposed to have had a very strange assignment too: *not* to engage in espionage in the coming war (which was of course the center of interest of *that* generation of the intelligence services) but only in the *next* one! And therefore he had loyally served the Tsar in World War I, and then the Soviet government also, and had put into operation the only optical factory in the country (GOMZ), and been elected to the Academy of Sciences, and then at the beginning of World War II he had been caught, rendered harmless, and shot!

However, for the most part fantastic accusations were not really required. There existed a very simple standardized collection of charges from which it was enough for the interrogator to pick one or two and stick them like postage stamps on an envelope:

- Discrediting the Leader
- A negative attitude toward the collective-farm structure
- A negative attitude toward state loans (and what normal person could have had a positive attitude!)
- A negative attitude toward the Stalinist constitution
- A negative attitude toward whatever was the immediate, particular measure being carried out by the Party
- Sympathy for Trotsky
- Friendliness toward the United States
- Etc., etc., etc.

2. And nonetheless this desperate wrecker was taken straight from the Kresty Prison . . . to war factories as a consultant.

The pasting on of these stamps of varying value was monotonous work requiring no artistry whatsoever. All the interrogator needed was the next victim in line, so as not to lose time. Such victims were selected on the basis of arrest quotas by Security chiefs of local administrative districts, military units, transportation departments, and educational institutions. And so that the Security chiefs did not have to strain their brains, denunciations from informers came in very handy.

In the conflicts between people in freedom, denunciations were the superweapon, the X-rays: it was sufficient to direct an invisible little ray at your enemy—and he fell. And it always worked. For these cases I have not recollected the names of the individuals involved, but I can affirm that I heard *many* stories in imprisonment about the use of denunciations in lovers' quarrels: a man would remove an unwanted husband; a wife would dispose of a mistress, or a mistress would dispose of a wife; or a mistress would take revenge on her lover because she had failed to separate him from his wife.

The most frequently used postage stamp was *Section 10*—counterrevolutionary (subsequently renamed anti-Soviet) agitation. If our descendants should someday read the interrogation and trial records of Stalin's times, they will be utterly astounded to find what indefatigable and adroit operators those anti-Soviet propagandists were. They were quite capable of using a needle or a tattered service cap for propaganda purposes, washed floors (see below) or unwashed linens, a smile or its absence, too expressive or too impenetrable a look, soundless thoughts inside the skull, notes in an intimate diary, love letters, graffiti in toilets. They propagandized on the highways and byways, at a fire, at the collective-farm market, in the kitchen, behind the domestic tea table, and in bed whispering in the ear. And only the invincible social structure of socialism could withstand such a propaganda assault!

In the Archipelago they used to love to joke that not all the articles of the Criminal Code were *accessible*. One or another person might wish to violate the law on protection of socialist property, but was not allowed near it. Some other person wouldn't hesitate to commit embezzlement—but could not manage to get a job as a cashier. To murder one had to have at least a knife; to possess a weapon unlawfully one first of all had to acquire a

weapon. To have carnal knowledge of animals one had to have livestock. Even Article 58 was not so easily accessible: just how can you betray the Motherland under the heading of Section 1b if you don't serve in the army? How can you establish contact with the world bourgeoisie, under Section 4, if you live in Khanty-Mansiisk? And how can you subvert state industry and transportation, under Section 7, if you work as a barber? If you don't have at least a stinking old sterilizer so it can explode (chemical engineer Chudakov, arrested in 1948 for "diversionary activities")?

But Section 10 of Article 58 was *universally accessible.* To aged old women and twelve-year-old schoolboys. To married and single, to pregnant women and virgins, to athletes and cripples, to drunk and sober, to those who can see and to the blind too, to owners of automobiles and beggars of alms. One can earn one's sentence via Section 10 just as readily in the winter as in the summer, on a weekday as on a Sunday, early morning and late at night, at work or at home, on a stair landing, at a Metro station, in a dense forest, in an intermission at the theater, or during the course of a solar eclipse.

The only other section which could rival Section 10 in its accessibility was Section 12—*failure to make a denunciation,* or "He knew but he didn't tell." All those same people listed above could receive this section and in all the same conditions, but the special advantage in this case was that one did not even have to open one's mouth, nor take pen in hand. The whole point of this section was failure to act! And the sentence was the same: ten years of imprisonment and five years "muzzled."

Of course, after the war Section 1 of Article 58—"treason to the Motherland"—no longer seemed difficult to attain either. Not only all the POW's, not only all those who had been in occupied territories had a right to it, but even those who had dallied over being evacuated from threatened areas and who thereby disclosed their *intent* to betray the Motherland. (Professor of mathematics Zhuravsky asked for three plane seats out of Leningrad: for his wife, his sick sister-in-law, and himself. They gave him two, none for the sister-in-law. He sent off his wife and sister-in-law and stayed behind. The authorities could only interpret this act to mean that the professor was waiting for the Germans. Article 58-1a, via 19, ten years.)

In comparison with those unfortunates described earlier—the tailor, the club watchman, the deaf and dumb man, the sailor, or the man from Vetluga—here are some others whose sentences will seem fully justified:

• The Estonian Enseld, who arrived in Leningrad from still independent Estonia, had a letter taken from him written in Russian. To whom? From whom? "I am an honorable man and I cannot tell you." (The letter was from V. Chernov to his relatives.) Aha, bastard! So you are an honorable man? So off to Solovki with you! At least he actually did have a letter.

• Girichevsky, the father of two front-line soldiers, got conscripted into peat digging during the wartime labor mobilization, and he criticized the watery oversalted soup there. (He actually did criticize! He did open his mouth!) And quite deservedly he got 58-10 for this—ten years. (He died picking potato peelings out of the camp slops. In his dirty pocket was a photograph of his son, his chest covered with medals.)

• Nesterovsky was an English-language teacher who in his own *home*, over the tea table, told his wife and her best friend (he really did tell them!) how impoverished and hungry were the rear areas on the right bank of the Volga River. Her best friend *did in* both the Nesterovskys: he got ten years under Section 10, and she got the same under Section 12. (And what about their apartment? I don't know, perhaps it went to the best friend?)

• N. I. Ryabinin, in 1941, said during our retreat, said aloud where everyone could hear, "We should have sung fewer songs like 'Don't touch us and we won't touch you! We'll give no quarter if you do!'" Well, now, a scoundrel like that certainly ought to have been shot at the very least, but they only gave him ten years.

• Reunov and Tretyukhin, both Communists, got as hot and bothered as if a wasp had stung them on the neck because the Party Congress was long overdue, and this was a violation of the statutes. (As if it were any of their lousy business!) They got ten each!

• Faina Yefimovna Epshtein, astounded at Trotsky's criminal activity, asked at a Party meeting: "Why was he allowed to leave the U.S.S.R.?" (As if the Party was answerable to her! And maybe Iosif Vissarionovich was kicking himself about that!) For this awkward question she deservedly got and served out *three terms*

one after another. (Even though not one of the interrogators or prosecutors could explain to her where her guilt lay.)

• And Grusha-the-Proletarian committed a crime of simply astounding gravity. She worked at a glass factory for twenty-three years and her neighbors had never seen an icon in her home. But just before the Germans got to her district she did put up some icons. (She had simply stopped being afraid; after all they *used to* persecute people who had icons!) And what the interrogation particularly noted on the basis of the denunciation of her neighbors was that she had also washed her floors! (But the Germans never did get there.) Then, too, she had picked up near her house a pretty German leaflet with a picture and pushed it into the vase on her dresser. And despite all this our humane court, taking into consideration her proletarian origins, gave Grusha *only* eight years of camp and three years of disenfranchisement. Meanwhile her husband perished at the front. And her daughter was a student in the technological institute, but the *cadres* kept tormenting her: "Where is your mother?" And the girl *poisoned herself*. (Grusha could never get past the point of her daughter's death in telling her story. She sobbed and went out.)

And what was Gennady Sorokin, a student in the third year at the Chelyabinsk Pedagogical Institute, to be given for having published two of his own essays in a students' literary journal (1946)? Small change, of course: ten years.

And what about reading the poet Sergei Yesenin? After all, we keep forgetting everything. Soon they will be telling us that "this was not so; Yesenin was always a revered poet of the people." But Yesenin was a counterrevolutionary poet. His verses were forbidden literature. M. Y. Potapova was charged as follows in the Ryazan State Security: "How did you dare admire Yesenin [before the war], if Iosif Vissarionovich said that the best and the most talented was Mayakovsky? That's how your anti-Soviet nature showed itself."

And that civil aviation flier, assistant pilot of a "Douglas," looks like a dyed-in-the-wool anti-Soviet. Not only did they find a complete collection of Yesenin in his possession, not only did he talk about how well-to-do and well fed people were in East Prussia until we got there—but during the course of *a public debate* in an aviation unit, he got into a public argument with Ilya Ehrenburg about Gemany. (In view of Ehrenburg's position at

that time one may conclude that the pilot was proposing gentler treatment of the Germans.)[3] At a debate—a public argument! Court-martial: ten years' imprisonment and five of disenfranchisement.

I. F. Lipai created a collective farm in his own local district a year before the bosses gave orders to create them—a completely voluntary collective farm! And could GPU Commissioner Ovsyannikov allow that hostile sally to go unchallenged? I don't need your good one. Give me my bad one! The collective farm was proclaimed to be kulak, and Lipai himself an ally of the kulaks—and they dragged him through the hummocks. . . .

F. V. Shavirin, a worker, spoke *out loud* (!) at a Party meeting about Lenin's testament! Well! Nothing could be worse than that—he had to be a sworn enemy! Whatever teeth he had managed to keep through the interrogation he lost in his first year in the Kolyma.

See what awful criminals were to be encountered among the 58's! And indeed some were really venomous, with a touch of the underground. For example, there was Perets Gertsenberg, an inhabitant of Riga. All of a sudden he moved to the Lithuanian Socialist Republic and registered himself as being of *Polish* origin. And in fact he was a Latvian Jew. What was particularly outrageous about this was the desire to deceive his own native state. It meant he was counting on our letting him go to Poland and from there he would slip off to Israel. Nothing doing, darling, you didn't want to stay in Riga, so off to Gulag. Betrayal of the Motherland via intention: ten years.

And what secretive people there were about too! In 1937 among the workers of the "Bolshevik" Factory (Leningrad) some former pupils of the trade schools were discovered who had been present, in 1929, at a meeting addressed by Zinoviev. (A list of those present had been found attached to the minutes.)

3. In Ehrenburg's memoirs you will find no trace of such trivial incidents. Anyway, he might not have known that the man arguing with him had been arrested. He merely offered a fairly standard Party-line reply at that particular moment and then forgot about it. Ehrenburg writes that he himself "survived by lottery." Well, that little lottery had marked numbers. If *they* were *rounding up* your friends, you had to stop phoning them in time. If the wagon shaft turned, it was necessary to turn too. Ehrenburg heated up hatred for the Germans so insanely that Stalin had to pull him up short. If you feel toward the end of your life that you helped establish a lie, then what is required to justify yourself is not memoirs but an immediate bold self-sacrifice.

For eight years these people had concealed themselves by sneaking into the ranks of the proletariat. Now all of them were arrested and shot.

Said Marx: "The state cripples itself by turning a citizen into a criminal."[4] And very touchingly he explained how in every violator of the law the state must see a warm-blooded human being as well, and a soldier who defends the Fatherland, and a member of the community, and a father of a family, "whose existence is sacred," and—most importantly—a citizen. But our jurists have no time to read Marx, particularly such unthought-out parts as these. Let Marx read our instructions if he feels like it.

People will exclaim that this whole list is what—monstrous? Ridiculous. That it is beyond belief? That Europe won't believe it?

Europe, of course, won't believe it. Not until Europe itself *serves time* will she believe it. Europe has believed our glossy magazines and can't get anything else into her head.

But what about us? Fifty years ago we would not have believed it either for anything. And one hundred years ago we would not have believed it. Belinsky, Chernyshevsky—they would not have believed it. But if we dig down three or four spades deep, back to Peter the Great and before—why shouldn't we believe it? What's so bad about that? It has been going on since time immemorial:

- The prison watchman Senka spoke: "Don't pull my beard! I'm a peasant who belongs to the state—but does that mean my beard belongs to the state too?" (Article 58—to be flogged with cudgels without mercy.)
- The Streltsy junior officer Ivashko Raspopin gestured with his finger and announced: "That's what you can do with your sovereign." (58—to be flogged with cudgels without mercy.)
- The tradesman Blestin, cursing out the Cossacks, said: "The great prince is stupid to give food and drink to you Cossacks." (Article 58—to be flogged with cudgels without mercy.)
- The knight Ivan Pashkov said: "The Sovereign-Tsar is higher than Saint Athanasius." And the sacristan of the Church of Saint Athanasius, Nezhdan, said: "Then why does the Tsar pray to Athanasius?" This was in Holy Week and both were

4. Marx and Engels, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 233.

drunk. Moscow delivered its verdict without prejudice: the boyar's son must be flogged with cudgels without mercy, and the sacristan flogged for the same reason.[5]

At the very least everyone keeps his mouth shut. And that is what is needed.

■

In the former Russia the *politicals* and the philistines were—two opposite extremes in the population. It was impossible to find more mutually exclusive ways of life and ways of thinking.

In the U.S.S.R. they began to rake in the philistines as "politicals."

And as a result the politicals were equated with the philistines.

Half the Archipelago consisted of the 58's. And there weren't any . . . politicals. (If there had been that many real *politicals*, the government would long since have been sitting on a different bench in the courtroom!)

Into this Article 58 were thrown all those for whom no criminal article had been chosen right off. It contained an unimaginable medley and motley.[6] To put a person into 58 was the simplest of all methods of getting rid of him, to remove him quickly and forever.

And in addition just plain *family members* went into this classification, especially the ChS wives. Today it is well known that the wives of important Party leaders were arrested as ChS's —members of families. But this custom had been established earlier. That was how they purged the families of the nobility as

5. These examples are taken from Plekhanov's book *Istoriya Russkoi Obshchestvennoi Mysli (A History of Russian Social Thought).*

6. For example, a young American who married a Soviet girl and was arrested the first night spent outside the American Embassy (Morris Gershman). Or a former Siberian partisan, Muravyov, famous for his reprisals against the Whites (vengeance for his brother), never got out of the GPU from 1930 on (it had begun because of gold) and in the end he lost his health, his teeth, his mind, and even his name (he became Foks). Or the Soviet quartermaster caught embezzling who fled from criminal prosecution into the Western zone of Austria. But when he got there—and here's a laugh!—he could not find employment. Stupid bureaucrat that he was, he wanted a high-ranking position there, but how could he get one in a society in which talents compete? So he decided to return to the Motherland. Here he received twenty-five years for the combined offenses of theft and suspected espionage. And glad was he: here he could breathe more freely!

Such examples are innumerable.

well, and the families of prominent intellectuals, and clerics. (And even in the fifties: the historian Kh——tsev received twenty-five years for committing ideological errors in his book. But shouldn't his wife get her sentence too? Ten years. But why leave out his old mother, aged seventy-five, and his sixteen-year-old daughter? Both got sentences for failure to inform on him. And all four were sent off to different camps without the right to correspond with one another.)

And the more peaceful, quiet, and even illiterate people, remote from politics, the more people occupied only with their own daily round before their arrest who were drawn into the maelstrom of undeserved punishment and death, the more gray and timid became Article 58. Stripped gradually of its last political sense, it turned into a lost herd of lost people.

But it isn't enough to say *who* made up Article 58. It is more important to know *how the 58's were treated* in camp.

From the first years of the Revolution on, this group was cut off on all sides: by the prison regimen and by juridical formulations.

If we take Cheka Order No. 10 of January 8, 1921, we learn there that only a worker or a peasant could not be arrested without convincing proofs—which means that an intellectual could be, say, just out of antipathy. Or if we listen to Krylenko at the Fifth Congress of Justice Workers in 1924, we learn that "in regard to convicted hostile-class elements . . . correction is impotent and *purposeless*." At the beginning of the thirties they remind us once more that shortening the terms of hostile-class elements is a right-opportunist practice. And it is also "an opportunist directive that held that 'in prison all are equal,' that from the moment of sentencing the class struggle somehow ceases to exist," that "the class enemy is beginning to 'be corrected.' "[7]

If we pull all of that together, then here's what: you can be arrested for *nothing:* and it is purposeless to try to correct you; and in camp we will put you in an oppressed position and finish you off there with class struggle.

But how are we to understand that the class struggle continues even in camp? After all, it's true, isn't it, that all prisoners are sort of equal. But no, don't be in such a hurry, that's a

7. Vyshinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 384.

bourgeois concept! The whole reason they deprived the politicals of the right to be held apart from the nonpolitical criminals was so as to have the criminals on their backs! (This was devised, too, by people who had come to understand in Tsarist prisons the strength of possible political unity, of political protest, and its dangers for the regime.)

Yes, here is Averbakh, Johnny-on-the-spot again, to explain to us: "The tactic of re-education is based on class differentiation . . . is based on the strata friendliest to the proletariat"[8] (and who are these friendly prisoners? They are "former workers," i.e., *thieves*, and they are the ones to be sicked on the 58's). "Re-education *is impossible without kindling political passions*" (and this is a literal quotation!).

And so when our lives were put wholly in the power of the thieves, this was no simple caprice on the part of lazy chiefs in remote camps, it was the exalted Theory!

"The class-differentiated approach to the regimen . . . incessant administrative pressure on hostile-class elements." Yes, dragging out your endless sentence, in your tattered padded jacket, with head bowed—can you even imagine this: *incessant administrative pressure on you?!*

And we can even read in that same remarkable book a list of methods for creating unbearable conditions for the 58's in camp. All you have to do, it says, is reduce the number of visits, parcels, correspondence, the right to complain, the right to move about within (!) the camp. And, it says, you have to create separate brigades of the hostile-class elements and *put them in more difficult situations* (I elucidate on my own: this means cheat them in measuring the work performed)—and then when they fail to fulfill the norm, declare this to be a sally of the class enemy. (Hence the Kolyma executions of entire brigades!) And then it gives frequent creative advice: The kulaks and their supporters (i.e., the best peasants imprisoned in the camps, those who even in their dreams used to yearn for peasants' work) were not to be assigned to agricultural work! And it also says: the highly skilled hostile-class element (in other words, the engineers) were not to be entrusted with any responsible work "without a preliminary verification." (But who is there in camp suf-

8. Averbakh, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

ficiently qualified to verify the engineers? Evidently the thieves' light cavalry from the Cultural and Educational Section, something like the Chinese Communist Red Guards.) It was difficult to act on this advice on the canals; after all, locks do not design themselves, the canal doesn't dig itself; so then Averbakh simply begged: let the specialists spend their first six months in camp at least on *general work.* (That's all it took to die!) In that case, presumably, through not living in a privileged intellectual barracks, "they will experience the pressure of the collective"; "the counterrevolutionaries will see that the masses are against them and despise them."

And how convenient it is, having mastered class ideology, to turn everything that takes place inside out. What if someone fixes up "former" top people and intellectuals with trusty jobs? Then it goes without saying that he "is giving the heaviest work to inmates from among the working class." What if a former officer is working in the storeroom, and there isn't enough clothing? Then it goes without saying that he is "deliberately holding it back." What if someone says to the shock-work record holders: "The others are not keeping pace with you"? Then it goes without saying that he is a class enemy! What if a thief gets drunk, or escapes, or steals? Then explain to him that it was not he who was guilty, that it was the class enemy who made him drunk, or taught him to escape, or taught him to steal (an intellectual teaching *a thief how to steal!*—and this was written quite seriously in 1936!). And if "the hostile element itself is turning in good work performances," he is "doing this for purposes of camouflage."

The circle is closed! Whether you work or whether you don't. Whether you love us or whether you don't. We hate you and will annihilate you with the hands of the thieves!

And so it is that Pyotr Nikolayevich Ptitsyn (imprisoned as a 58) sighs: "Well, you see the real criminals are incapable of genuine labor. It is actually the innocent person who sacrifices himself totally, to the last breath. There is the drama: the enemy of the people is the friend of the people."

But—nobody needs your sacrifice.

"An innocent person!" That is the main sensation of those ersatz politicals rounded up and put into camps. In all probability this was an unprecedented event in world prison history: when *millions* of prisoners realize that they are right, all of them

right, and that *no one* is guilty. (Only *one* innocent was imprisoned at hard labor with Dostoyevsky.)

However, these crowds of chance people, chased behind barbed wire not in conformity with their convictions but by a thrust of fate, were by no means strengthened by the consciousness of their own rightness. Perhaps it even oppressed them more by emphasizing the absurdity of their situation. Clinging more to their former way of life than to any convictions whatever, they in no way manifested readiness for sacrifice, unity, or fighting spirit. While still in prison, entire cells allowed themselves to be plundered by two or three snotty thieves. By the time they got to the camps they were already totally demoralized. All they were prepared to do was to bend their backs beneath the cudgels of the work assigner and the thief, beneath the fist of the brigadier, and all they remained capable of was mastering the camp philosophy (disunity, everyone for himself, and mutual deceit) and the camp language.

When she arrived in a general camp in 1938, Y. Olitskaya looked on all those 58's with astonishment, with the eyes of a socialist who had known Solovki and the isolators. Once, in her own recollection, the politicals shared everything, but now each one lived and chewed only for himself, and even the "politicals" traded clothes and rations!

Political riffraff—that's what Anna Skripnikova called them (us). Back in 1925 she herself had learned that lesson: she complained to the interrogator that her cellmates were being dragged by their hair by the Lubyanka Prison chief. The interrogator *laughed* and asked her: "Is he dragging you too?" "No, but my comrades!" And he exclaimed in deadly earnest: "Aha, how frightening it is that you protest! Drop all those *useless airs of the Russian intelligentsia!* They are *out of date!* Worry *about yourself only!* Otherwise, you're in for a hard time."

And this is exactly the thieves' principle: If they're not raking you in, then don't lie down and ask for it.* The Lubyanka interrogator in 1925 *already* possessed the thieves' philosophy.

And so to the question which sounds so outlandish to the educated public: "Can a *political* steal?" we simply have to counter with astonishment: "And why not?"

"Is he capable of *informing?*" "What makes him any worse than the others?"

And when people naïvely protest to me about *Ivan Denisovich*:

"How is it that the politicals in your book express themselves in thieves' jargon?" I have to reply: "And what if there is no other language in the Archipelago? Do you really expect political riff-raff to counterpose a language of their own to that of the criminal riffraff?"

They drum into them day and night that they are criminals, and the most heinous of all criminals, and that those who are *not* criminals are not imprisoned in our country!

They broke the back of the 58's—and there were *no* politicals. Having poured them into the pigs' trough of the Archipelago, they drove them to die at work and shouted into their ears the camp lie that each was an enemy of the other.

The proverb says: "When hunger takes hold, the voice will appear." But among us, among our natives, it did not. Even from hunger.

And yet how little, how very little, they needed to be saved! Just one thing: not to cling to life, which was already lost anyway, and . . . to rally together.

This took place with success sometimes among entire foreign groups, for example, the Japanese. In 1947, at Revuchi, the penalty camp for the Krasnoyarsk camps, they brought in about forty Japanese officers, so-called "war criminals." (Though one could not even imagine what they were guilty of in relation to us.) It was bitterly cold. There was logging, unbearable even for Russians. The *otritsalovka*—"the band of rejecters"[9]—swiftly stole the clothes from some of them and swiped the whole tray with their bread several times. The Japanese, in dismay, waited for the chiefs to intervene, but the chiefs, of course, paid no attention. Then their brigadier, Colonel Kondo, accompanied by two senior officers, went one evening to the office of the camp chief and warned him (they knew Russian very well) that if the violence against them did not stop, two officers who had announced their desire to do so would commit hara-kiri at dawn the next morning. And this would be only the beginning. The chief of the camp (the blockhead Yegorov, former political commissar of a regiment) immediately sensed that he could very easily come to a bad end because of this. For two days the Japanese

9. The members of the "otritsalovka" took the position: "I reject everything the chiefs demand of me—both the regimen and the work." Customarily this was a powerful nucleus of thieves.

brigade was not taken out to work, was fed normally, and then taken off the penalty regimen.

How little was required for struggle and victory—*merely* not to cling to life! A life that was in any case already lost.

But our 58's were kept constantly mixed with the thieves and the nonpolitical offenders and were never allowed to be alone together—so they wouldn't look into one another's eyes and realize: *who we are.* And those bright heads, hot tongues, and firm hearts who might have become prison and camp leaders—had all, on the basis of special notations in their *files*, been culled out, gagged, and hidden away in special isolators and shot in cellars.

■

However, in accordance with that important phenomenon of life noted already in the teachings of Taoism, we were bound to expect that the moment the politicals ceased to exist was also the very moment when they appeared.

I will risk declaring that in the Soviet period not only were there genuine politicals, but also that:

1. There were *more* of them than in Tsarist times, and
2. They manifested *more* steadfastness and courage than did the earlier revolutionaries.

This seems to contradict the preceding, but it does not. The politicals in Tsarist Russia were in a very favorable situation, very much in the public eye—producing immediate repercussions in society and the press. And we have already seen (in Part I, Chapter 12) that in Soviet Russia the socialists had things incomparably more difficult.

And not only socialists were now politicals. The politicals were splashed in tubfuls into the fifteen-million-criminal ocean, and they were invisible and inaudible to us. They were mute. They were muter than all the rest. Their image was the fish.

The fish, symbol of the early Christians. And the Christians were their principal contingent. Clumsy, semiliterate, unable to deliver speeches from the rostrum or compose an underground proclamation (which their faith made unnecessary anyway), they went off to camp to face tortures and death—only so as not to

renounce their faith! They knew very well *for what* they were serving time, and they were unwavering in their convictions! They were the only ones, perhaps, to whom the camp philosophy and even the camp language did not stick. And were these not politicals? Well, you'd certainly not call them riffraff.

And women among them were particularly numerous. The Tao says: When faith collapses, that is when the true believers appear. Because of our enlightened scoffing at Orthodox priests, the squalling of the Komsomol members on Easter night,* and the whistles of the thieves at the transit prisons, we overlooked the fact that the sinful Orthodox Church had nonetheless nurtured daughters worthy of the first centuries of Christianity—sisters of those thrown to the lions in the arenas.

There was a multitude of Christians: prisoner transports and graveyards, prisoner transports and graveyards. Who will count those millions? They died unknown, casting only in their immediate vicinity a light like a candle. They were the best of Russia's Christians. The worst had all . . . trembled, recanted, and gone into hiding.

Is this not *more?* Was there ever a time when Tsarist Russia had known that many politicals? Tsarist Russia could not even count them in tens of thousands.

But so cleanly, so unwitnessed was the strangling of our politicals, that it is only rarely that the story of one or another surfaces for us.

Archpriest Preobrazhensky (the face of a Tolstoi, a gray beard). Prison, exile, camp, prison, exile, camp (the Big Solitaire). After being worn down in this way for many, many years, in 1943 he was summoned to the Lubyanka—and on the way there the thieves stole his tall cylindrical priest's hat. It was proposed to him that he become a member of the Synod. It would seem that after so many years he might have allowed himself some respite from prison? But no, he refused: it was not a pure synod, not a pure church. And—back to camp.

And what about Valentin Feliksovich Voino-Yasenetsky (1877–1961), Archbishop Luke, and author of the famous work *Purulent Surgery?* His biography will, of course, be compiled, and it is not for us to write about him here. This man abounded in talent. Before the Revolution he had already successfully competed for entry into the Academy of Arts, but had left it in order

to serve humanity better—as a physician. In the hospitals of World War I he emerged as an expert eye surgeon, and after the Revolution he headed a Tashkent clinic, extremely popular in all Central Asia. A smooth and untroubled career was spread out before him, like the paths trod by our highly successful contemporaries. But Voino-Yasenetsky sensed that his service was insufficient, and he put on the robes of a priest. He hung an icon in his operating room and delivered his lectures to his students wearing clerical robes and with a cross around his neck (1921). Patriarch Tikhon managed to appoint him Bishop of Tashkent. In the twenties Voino-Yasenetsky was exiled to the Turukhansky region, but was then brought back thanks to the exertions of many, but his chair and his diocese had already been taken. He had a private practice (the sign on his door reading "Bishop Luke"), and masses of the sick poured in to see him (the "leather coats," too, in secret), and he gave what he did not need of his money to the poor.

It is worth noting how they got rid of him. He had been sent to his second exile (in Archangel in 1930) not as a 58, but "for inciting to murder." (This was a nonsensical story, according to which he had brought influence to bear on the wife and mother-in-law of the physiologist Mikhailovsky who committed suicide —and who, when already insane, had been engaged in injecting into corpses solutions which had allegedly stopped the disintegration of tissue, about which the newspapers had made a big to-do as a "triumph of Soviet science" and artificial "resurrection.") This administrative method compels us to take an even more informal approach to the question of who the real politicals were. If not struggle with the regime, then moral or energetic resistance to it— that is the chief criterion. And the matter of which "article" was pasted on didn't mean a thing. (Many sons of the liquidated "kulaks" were given thieves' articles, but in camp showed themselves to be genuine politicals.)

In exile in Archangel, Voino-Yasenetsky worked out a new method of healing purulent wounds. He was summoned to Leningrad, and Kirov himself tried to persuade him to lay aside his priest's robes and immediately offered him his own institute. But the stubborn bishop would not even consent to have his book published without an indication, in parentheses, of his clerical rank. And thus it was that without an institute and without his

book he completed his exile in 1933, returned to Tashkent, and there was sentenced to a third term of exile, in the Krasnoyarsk region. From the beginning of the war, he worked in Siberian hospitals, where he applied his technique of healing purulent wounds—and this led him to a Stalin Prize. And he only agreed to accept it dressed in his full bishop's regalia.[10]

And the engineers? How many of them refused to sign stupid, disgusting confessions of wrecking and were scattered to the four winds and shot? And how Pyotr Akimovich (Ioakimovich) Palchinsky (1875–1929) gleams like a bright star among them! He was an engineer and scholar with an astonishing breadth of interests. A graduate (in 1900) of the Mining Institute, an outstanding authority on mining, he studied and, as can be seen from the list of his books, left behind him works on general questions of economic development, on the fluctuations of industrial prices, on the export of coal, on the equipment and operation of Europe's trading ports, on the economic problems of port management, on industrial-safety techniques in Germany, on concentration in the German and English mining industries, on the economics of mining, on the reconstruction and development of the building materials industry in the U.S.S.R., on the general training of engineers in higher education—and, in addition, works on purely mining subjects, such as descriptions of individual areas and individual ore deposits (and not all his works are yet known to us today). Like Voino-Yasenetsky in medicine, Palchinsky would never have come to grief in his own engineering work; but just as the former could not stop propagating the faith, so he could not stop meddling in politics. Even as a student in the Mining Institute, Palchinsky had been listed by the Tsarist gendarmes as a "leader of the movement." In 1900 he had been the chairman of a students' assembly. As an engineer in 1905 in Irkutsk he had already been prominently involved in the revolutionary uprisings, and in the "case of the Irkutsk Republic" he was sentenced to hard labor. He escaped and went off to Europe. Having already before this been in sympathy with the Anarchists, he became friendly with Kropotkin. He used his émigré years to perfect his knowledge in several engineering areas and studied European

10. When medical students today ask about his biography, they receive the reply: "There is no literature on him."

technology and economics, but at the same time he never lost sight of the program of popular publications "for disseminating Anarchist ideas among the masses." In 1913, amnestied, he returned to Russia and wrote to Kropotkin: "In view of the program of my own activities in Russia, I aim to take part . . . wherever I am able in the general development of the productive forces of the country and in the development of spontaneous social and public activity in the broadest sense of this word."[11] During his first trip through the main Russian centers, he was snowed under with suggestions to stand for such positions as business manager of the Council of the Congress of the Mining Industry, offered "brilliant positions in directorships in the Donbas," consultancies to banks, lecturer in the Mining Institute, the post of director of the Department of Mines. There were few men in Russia with such energy and such broad knowledge!

And what was his further fate? We have already reported above (Part I, Chapter 10) how in World War I he became a Deputy Chairman of the War Industry Committee and, after the February Revolution, Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry. As evidently the most energetic of the members of the weak-willed Provisional Government, Palchinsky was successively Governor-General of Petrograd during the Kornilov days[12] and Chief of Defense of the Winter Palace during the October Revolution. Immediately afterward he was imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress and served four months there. Then, it's true, he was released. In June, 1918, he was arrested without any charges being made against him. On September 6, 1918, he was included in a list of 122 prominent hostages. ("If even one Soviet official is killed, the hostages listed below will be shot. Signed: Petrograd Cheka; G. Boky, Chairman; A. Ioselevich, Secretary.")[13] However, he was not shot, and at the end of 1918 he was even released because of the inappropriate intervention of the German Social-Democrat Karl Moor (who was astounded at the kind of people we were leaving to rot in prison). From 1920 on he was a professor at the Mining Institute, visited Kropotkin in Dmitrov, and after Kropotkin's death not long afterward created a committee

11. Letter to Kropotkin, February 20, 1913, TsGAOR, collection 1129, shelf 2, unit 1936.

12. *Birzhevyye Vedomosti* (*Stock Exchange News*), August 31, 1917, and September 2, 1917.

13. *Petrogradskaya Pravda*, September 6, 1918, No. 193.

for the (unsuccessful) perpetuation of Kropotkin's memory—and soon, either because of or notwithstanding this, was again arrested. A curious document on the release of Palchinsky from this third Soviet imprisonment has been preserved in the archives—a letter to the Moscow Revtribunal, dated January 16, 1922:

Considering that the permanent consultant of the State Planning Commission, Engineer P. A. Palchinsky, is to deliver a report in the Southern Bureau on Jan. 18 of this year at 3 P.M. on the question of restoring Southern Metallurgy, which is of particularly important significance at the present moment, the Presidium of the State Planning Commission requests the Revtribunal to release Comrade Palchinsky by the above-named hour in order that he may carry out the assignment given him.

Chairman of the State Planning Commission
KRZHIZHANOVSKY[14]

Krzhizhanovsky *asked*—and without much authority either. And only because southern metallurgy was of "particularly important significance at the present moment," and only "in order that [Palchinsky] may carry out the assignment given him"—otherwise you can do whatever you want with him, or put him back in his cell if you please.

No, Palchinsky was permitted to go on working for a while, reconstructing the mining industry of the U.S.S.R. After showing heroic steadfastness in prison, he was shot without trial—in 1929.

You would have to have no love whatever for your country, you would have to be hostile to it, to shoot the pride of the nation—its concentrated knowledge, energy, and talent!

And wasn't it exactly the same twelve years later in the case of Nikolai Ivanovich Vavilov? Was not Vavilov a genuine political (out of bitter necessity)? In the course of eleven months of interrogation he endured four hundred interrogation sessions. And at his trial (July 9, 1941) he refused to confess to the charges against him!

And without any world fame whatever, the hydraulic engineer Professor Rodionov (Vitkovsky has told us about him) *refused* to work at his profession when he was imprisoned—though that would have been the easy path for him. He cobbled boots. Was he not a genuine political? He was a peaceful hydraulic engineer. He had never prepared for struggle. But if despite his prison keepers, he held fast to his convictions—was he not a genuine

14. TsGAOR, collection 3348, unit 167, sheet 32.

political? What need had he for some Party membership card for that?

Just as a star suddenly flares to a hundred times its previous brightness—and then fades away, so, too, a human being not disposed to be a political may nonetheless flare up briefly and intensely in prison and perish as a result. Ordinarily we do not learn about these cases. Sometimes there is a witness to tell about them. Sometimes there is merely a faded piece of paper in front of us on which we can only build hypotheses:

Yakov Yefimovich Pochtar, 1887, non-Party, physician. From the beginning of the war he was at the 45th Air Force Base of the Black Sea Fleet. His first sentence from a court-martial at the Sevastopol base (November 17, 1941) was five years of corrective-labor camp. This would seem to be not too bad. But what's this? There was a second sentence on November 22: to be shot. And on November 27 he was shot. What happened in those fateful five days between the seventeenth and the twenty-second? Did he explode like a star? Or was it merely that the judges suddenly realized they had given him too little?[15]

What about the Trotskyites? They were pure-blooded politicals. That's something you cannot deny them.

(Someone is shouting at me! A little bell is being jingled at me: Stop right there! Speak about the one-and-only politicals! About the uncrushable Communists who even in the camps continued to keep the sacred faith . . . All right, we will set aside the next chapter separately for them.)

Someday historians will study the question: At what moment did a trickle of *political young people* begin to flow in our country? It seems to me that it began in 1943 and 1944. (I am not referring here to the socialist and Trotskyite young people.) While still practically schoolboys, they suddenly began to seek out their own platform (remember the "Democratic Party" of 1944), different from the one that was being intensely urged on them and shoved under their feet. Well, what else can we call them?

Only that we know nothing of them and never will.

But if twenty-two-year-old Arkady Belinkov was imprisoned for his first novel, *A Rough Draft of Feelings* (1943), never published, of course, and continued to write in camp (but at death's

15. He has now been rehabilitated on the initial charges. And that means that if it had not been for the second case against him . . . ?

door trusted the stool pigeon Kermaier and was handed another sentence), can we really deny him the title of political?

In 1950 the students of the Leningrad School of Mechanics created their own party with a program and statutes. Many were shot. Aron Levin, who got twenty-five years for it, told us. And that is all: a roadside marker.

And it goes without saying that our contemporary politicals need incomparably greater steadfastness and heroism than the earlier revolutionaries. In those days the punishments given for far more serious actions were quite light and revolutionaries didn't have to be so very bold: in case of failure they risked only themselves (not their families!), and not even their heads—but a short term only.

What did posting leaflets amount to before the Revolution? It was an amusement, like scaring pigeons, and you wouldn't even get three months for it. But five boys in Vladimir Gershuni's group prepared leaflets declaring that "Our government has compromised itself!" This required approximately the same determination as the five boys in Aleksandr Ulyanov's group needed in their attempt to assassinate the Tsar.

And how the following story blazes up through spontaneous combustion, how it comes awake on its own somewhere inside! In the city of Leninsk-Kuznetskiy was one boys' school. Starting in the ninth grade, five boys (Misha Bakst, their Komsomol organizer; Tolya Tarantin, also a Komsomol activist; Velvel Reikhtman, Nikolai Konev, and Yuri Anikanov) lost their peace of mind. Not over the girls nor over the latest dances—they looked around them at the savagery and drunkenness in their own city and pored over their history textbooks, trying to make connections and compare. As they entered the tenth grade in 1950, just before the elections to the local soviets, they produced their first (and last) naïve leaflet, in printed characters:

Listen, worker! Are we really living the kind of life for which our grandfathers, fathers, and brothers fought? We work—and get only a pitiful pittance in return, and they even cut down on that too. Read this and think about your life.

They themselves were only thinking—and therefore they did not summon to any particular action. (Their plan was to issue a series of such leaflets and to make their own hectograph.)

Here is how they posted the leaflets: They went around together at night. One of them would plaster four pieces of wet bread on the wall, and another would paste a leaflet on them.

In early spring some new pedagogue came to them in class and asked them . . . to fill out a questionnaire, printing the letters.[16] The principal pleaded that they not be arrested before the end of the school year. Imprisoned and under interrogation, the boys regretted most of all not being at their own graduation party. "Who was directing you? Confess!" (The gaybisty simply couldn't believe that the boys had been guided simply by their own consciences. After all, it was an extraordinary occurrence. After all, you only live once. Why *think about things?*) Punishment blocks, night interrogations, long hours of standing. A session of the Provincial Court closed to the public (of course).[17] Pitiable defense lawyers, confused judicial assessors, a threatening prosecutor named Trutnev(!).* And all of them given eight- and ten-year sentences, and all of them, seventeen-year-olds, sent to Special Camps.

No, the old proverb does not lie: Look for the brave in prison, and the stupid among the political leaders!

I am writing for mute Russia and therefore I have but little to say about the Trotskyites; they are all people who write, and any who have succeeded in surviving have in all probability prepared detailed memoirs and will write their dramatic epics more completely and more accurately than I could.

But here are a few words for the sake of the overall picture.

They conducted a regular underground struggle in the late twenties, deploying all their experience as former revolutionaries, except that the GPU arrayed against them was not as stupid as the Tsarist Okhrana. I do not know whether they were prepared for that total annihilation which Stalin had allotted them, or whether they still thought that it would all end with jokes and reconciliation. In any case, they were heroic people. (I fear, however, that if they had come to power, they would have brought us a madness no better than Stalin's.) Let us note that even in

16. The boys were sold down the river by Fyodor Polotnyanshchikov, later Party organizer at the Polysayev mine. The country must know its stool pigeons.

17. The judge's name was Pushkin. He was soon afterward convicted of accepting bribes.

the thirties, when their end was near, they still considered any kind of contact with the socialists to be a betrayal and a disgrace, and therefore kept to themselves in the isolators and would not even pass on the prison mail of the socialists. (You see, they considered themselves Leninists.) The wife of I. N. Smirnov (even after his execution) avoided contact with the socialists "so that the jailers would not see it" (i.e., so to say, the eyes of the Communist Party)!

One gets the impression (though I will not insist on it) that there was too much vanity in their political "struggle" in camp conditions, which gave it a touch of tragicomedy. In the cattle trains from Moscow to the Kolyma they used to agree "on underground contacts, passwords"—and they were scattered among various camps and various brigades.

For instance, a brigade of prisoners sent up for Counter-Revolutionary Trotskyite Activity which had honestly earned its work ration was suddenly put on penalty rations. What was to be done? "The well-hidden underground Communist Party cell" discussed the question. Should they strike? But this would have meant to nibble the bait of the provocation. They want us to fall for their provocation, but we—we will go proudly to work even without our ration! We will go to work, but we will work on a penalty-norm basis.[18]

At Utiny Goldfield they were making preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the October Revolution. They collected black rags and they blackened white ones with charcoal. On the morning of November 7 they intended to hang black mourning flags on all the tents and to sing the "Internationale" at line-up, locking arms firmly so as not to allow the jailers or the convoy guards into their ranks. They were determined to sing it through, no matter what! And then not under any circumstances to leave the camp compound to work! And to shout slogans: "Down with Fascism!" "Hail Leninism!" "Hail the Great October Socialist Revolution!"

18. This was 1937, and the brigade included not only "pure" Trotskyites but also "pure" orthodox Stalinists sentenced as Trotskyites. They had sent petitions to the Central Committee addressed to Comrade Stalin, to the NKVD addressed to Comrade Yezhov, to the Central Executive Committee addressed to Comrade Kalinin, and to the Prosecutor General also, and at the time they were anxious to avoid a falling-out with the camp chiefs, on whom would depend the accompanying recommendations.

In this plan we find a sort of hysterical enthusiasm mixed with futility, bordering on the ridiculous.

However, someone, or one of themselves, *turned them in* ahead of time, and on November 6 they were taken to Yubileiny Goldfield and locked in for the holidays. In closed tents (which they were forbidden to leave) they sang the "Internationale," just as the Yubileiny sloggers were going out to work. (But even among those singing there was a division: present were unjustly imprisoned Communists who stood aside, who did not sing the "Internationale," but showed their orthodoxy by their silence.)

"If we are being kept behind bars that means we are still worth something," Aleksandr Boyarchikov consoled himself. A false consolation. Who didn't they keep there?

The greatest achievement of the Trotskyites in the camp struggle was their hunger strike and work stoppage throughout the entire Vorkuta system of camps. (Before that also there had been a hundred-day strike somewhere in the Kolyma, it seems: they demanded a free settlement instead of camps, and they *won:* they were promised satisfaction, and the hunger strike was lifted, they were scattered among various camps, where they were gradually annihilated.) The information I have on the Vorkuta hunger strike is contradictory. Here is approximately how it went:

It began on October 27, 1936, and continued for 132 days. (They were fed artificially, but did not lift the hunger strike.) Several died of starvation. Their demands were:

- Separation of the politicals from the criminals[19]
- An eight-hour workday
- The restoration of the special ration for politicals[20] and the issuing of rations independently of work performance
- Destruction of the OSO—the Special Board—and annulment of its verdicts

They were fed through a tube, and thereupon a rumor spread through the camps that there was a shortage of sugar and butter "because it had all been fed to the Trotskyites"—a trick worthy of

19. Did they include among those politicals the 58's other than themselves? Probably not; if they had rejected even the socialists, they were unable to recognize the KR's as their brothers.

20. This, of course, was solely for themselves.

the bluecaps! In March, 1937, a telegram came from Moscow: The demands of the hunger strikers are to be accepted in toto! The hunger strike was lifted. Helpless prisoners, how could they enforce the fulfillment of those promises? They were just lied to—not one of their demands was met. (No Westerner will ever believe or comprehend that it was possible to act like this. But that's the whole story of our country.) On the contrary, all the hunger strikers were processed through the security chief's office and charged with continuing their counterrevolutionary activity.

The great hoot owl in the Kremlin had already thought up his short shrift for them.

A bit later at Vorkuta Mine No. 8 there was one more big hunger strike. (Which may have been part of the preceding one.) One hundred and seventy persons participated in it, certain of them known by name: the strikers' spokesman was Mikhail Shapiro, a former worker of the Kharkov VEF; Dmitri Kurinevsky from the Kiev Province Komsomol Committee; Ivanov, former commander of a squadron of patrol boats in the Baltic Fleet; Orlov-Kamenetsky; Mikhail Andreyevich; Polevoi-Genkin; V. V. Verap, the editor of the Tbilisi newspaper *Zarya Vostoka (Dawn of the East)*; Sokrat Gevorkyan, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party in Armenia; Grigory Zolotnikov, a history professor; and his wife.

The nucleus of the hunger strike consisted of sixty persons imprisoned together in 1927–1928 in the Verkhne-Uralsk Isolator. It was a big surprise—gratifying to the strikers and unpleasant for the chiefs—that twenty thieves also joined in the strike, headed by their ringleader, who was known by the nickname of *Moscow*. (In that camp he was famous for one nighttime escapade: he had made his way to the camp chief's office and there relieved himself on the desk. Any of our politicals would have been shot for that, but all he got was a reprimand: It must have been the class enemy who taught you that.) These twenty thieves truly irritated the chiefs, whereas the security officer of Vorkutlag, Uzkov, taunted the "hunger-strike leadership" of hostile prisoners by saying: "Do you think that Europe knows about your strike? We don't give a damn about Europe!"

And he was right. But the socially friendly bandits could be neither beaten up nor allowed to die. However, halfway through the strike things got through to their lumpenproletariat conscious-

ness, and the thieves broke off, and their ringleader, Moscow, explained on the camp radio that the Trotskyites had deceived him.

After this the fate of the rest was to be shot. Their hunger strike had provided both their applications and the list of those executed.

No, there were genuine politicals. There were many of them. And they sacrificed themselves.

But why were the results of their opposition so insignificant? Why did they not leave even the scantiest bubbles on the surface?

We will analyze this too. Later on.[21]

21. Part V, Chapter 4.

Chapter 11

■

The Loyalists

But I hear an angry roar of voices. The *comrades'* patience has run out! They will slam my book shut, toss it away, and spit on it:

"In the last analysis, this is brazen impudence! It's slander! Where is he looking for genuine politicals? Whom is he writing about? About some priests, technocrats, sniveling schoolboys . . .? The real politicals are us! Us, the unshakable! Us, the orthodox, crystal-clear people." (And Orwell called them *Goodthinkers.*) Us, who even in the camps stayed faithful to the very end to the one-and-only-true . . .

Yes, judging by our press and publishers—you were the only ones imprisoned, by and large. Only you suffered. You are the only ones we are allowed to write about. All right, let's do it.

Will the reader agree with this criterion: that political prisoners are those who know *what* they are serving time *for* and are firm in their convictions?

If you agree, then here is the answer: Our unshakable Communists, who despite their personal arrest remained devoted to the one-and-only-true, etc., were firm in their convictions *but did not know what they were serving time for!* And therefore they cannot be considered political prisoners.

If my criterion is no good, then let us take the criterion of Anna Skripnikova, who, in the course of her five terms, had time enough to think the matter over. Here it is:

A political prisoner is one with beliefs whose renunciation could could secure his release. People without such beliefs are political riffraff.

In my opinion this is not a bad criterion. All those who at any time have been persecuted for ideology fit into it. All revolutionaries fit into it. All the so-called "nuns" and the Archpriest Preobrazhensky fit into it, and Engineer Palchinsky. But the orthodox Communists . . . do not: Which beliefs are they being required to renounce?

None. And that means that the orthodox Communists, even though it is insulting to put it this way, are like that tailor and the deaf-and-dumb man and the club watchman, who fitted into the category of helpless, uncomprehending victims. But—with arrogance.

Let us be precise and define our subject. Who are we going to be dealing with in this chapter?

With all those who, despite their imprisonment, the mockery of an interrogation, their undeserved sentence, and the subsequent searing camp experiences, retained their Communist convictions?

No, not about all of them. Among them were people for whom this Communist faith was an inner thing, sometimes the sole meaning of the lives remaining to them, but:

- They did not let it lead them into taking a "party" attitude toward their imprisoned comrades, and in cell and barracks arguments they did not shout at others that these latter had been justly imprisoned. (Meaning that "I" was imprisoned unjustly.)
- They did not rush to declare to the citizen camp chief (and to the security chief), "I am a Communist," and did not use this formula to survive in camp.
- And now, when speaking of the past, they do not see the principal and only violence of the camps to have consisted in the fact that Communists were imprisoned—and spit on all the rest.

In a word, they were those whose Communist convictions were inward and not constantly on the tips of their tongues. It was as if this were an individualist trait, but in fact such individuals did not ordinarily hold big jobs in freedom, and in camp they worked as ordinary sloggers.

Take, for example, Avenir Borisov, a village schoolteacher:

"Do you remember our youth—I myself was born in 1912—when our supreme happiness was the green 'Jungsturm' uniform made out of homespun cloth, with a waist belt and a shoulder strap, when we despised money and everything private and personal and *were ready to march in any cause, as soon as the summons came?*[1] I joined the Komsomol at the age of thirteen. And when I was all of twenty-four years old the NKVD organs charged me with nearly every section in Article 58." (We will see later how he conducted himself after his release; he is a decent person.)

Or Boris Mikhailovich Vinogradov, with whom I served time in prison. In his youth he had been a locomotive engineer (not just for one year either, in the way that certain deputies were shepherds for a year). After the workers' school and an institute, he became a railway transport engineer (and was not put immediately on Party work, as often happens too), and he was a good engineer (in the sharashka he carried out complex calculations in gas dynamics for jet turbines). But by 1941, it's true, he had become the Party organizer of the Moscow Institute for Railroad Engineering. In the bitter Moscow days of October 16 and 17, 1941, seeking instructions, he telephoned but no one replied. He went to the District Party Committee, the City Party Committee, the Provincial Party Committee, and found no one there; everyone had scattered to the winds; their chambers were empty. And it seems he didn't go any higher than that. He returned to his own people in the Institute and declared: "Comrades! All the leaders have run away. But we are Communists, we will join the defense." And they did just that. But for that remark of his, "They have all run away," those who had run away sent him who had not run away to prison for eight years—for Anti-Soviet Propaganda. He was a quiet worker, a dedicated friend, and only in heart-to-heart conversation would he disclose that he believed, believes, and will go on believing. And he never wore it on his sleeve.

Or take the geologist Nikolai Kalistratovich Govorko, who, when he was a Vorkuta last-legger, composed his "Ode to Stalin" (which has been preserved). But he did not write it for publication, nor in order to receive privileges in return, but because it poured straight from his heart. And he hid that ode in the mine! (Though what was there to hide?)

1. The italics, to be sure, are mine.

Sometimes such people kept their faith to the end. Sometimes (like Kovacs, a Hungarian from Philadelphia arrested in 1937, who belonged to one of the thirty-nine families who had come to found a commune near Kakhovka) they refused after rehabilitation to take back their Party card. Certain others broke away even earlier, like another Hungarian named Szabo, who had been commander of a Siberian partisan detachment in the Civil War. Back in 1937 he had declared in prison, "If I were free right now, I'd collect my partisans together, raise Siberia, and march on Moscow and chase all those bastards out."

So we are not going to deal in this chapter with Communists of either the first or the second kind. (And the orthodox Communists themselves have eliminated all those who broke with the Party, like the two Hungarians.)

Nor will we be concerned with such anecdotal individuals—as those who in prison only pretended to be orthodox Communists, so that the *cell stoolie* would give the interrogator a good report: like the young Podvarkov, who when free had pasted up leaflets, but in the Spassk Camp used to argue loudly with all opponents of the regime, including his own father, counting on lightening his own fate by this means.

Here we shall concern ourselves particularly with those orthodox Communists who made a display of their ideological orthodoxy first to the interrogator, then in the prison cells, and then in camp to all and everyone, and now recall their camp past in this light.

By a strange selective process none of them will be sloggers. Such people ordinarily had held big jobs before their arrest, and had had an enviable situation; and in camp they found it hardest of all to reconcile themselves to extinction, and they fought fiercest of all to rise above the universal zero. In this category were all the interrogators, prosecutors, judges, and camp officials who had landed behind bars. And all the theoreticians, dogmatists, and loud-mouths (the writers G. Serebryakova, B. Dyakov, and Aldan-Semyonov belong here, and nowhere else).

We have to understand them, and we won't scoff at them. It was painful for them to fall. "When you cut down trees, the chips will fly!" was the cheerful proverb of justification. And then suddenly they themselves were chopped off with all the other chips.

Prokhorov-Pustover describes a scene at Manzovka, a special

camp of BAMlag, at the beginning of 1938. To the surprise of all the natives, they brought in some sort of unprecedented "special contingent" and separated it from the others with great secretiveness. No one had ever yet observed such an arrival: the newcomers wore leather coats, fur caps, woolen and cheviot suits, fashionable shoes and oxfords (by the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution this select group had already discovered a standard of taste in clothes which was not available to working people). Because of bad management or out of mockery the camp authorities didn't give them work clothes and drove them out just as they were, in their cheviots and chrome leather, to dig ditches in liquid clay up to their knees. At the junction of the wheelbarrow run one zek upset a wheelbarrow with cement, and the cement poured out. A thief brigadier ran up, cursed the zek at fault, and pushed him in the back: "Pick it up with your hands, stupid!" And the zek shouted hysterically: "How dare you taunt me! I am a former prosecutor of the Republic!" And big tears rolled down his face. "What the ——— do I care if you're a prosecutor of the Republic, scum! I'll push your snoot in that cement, then you'll be a prosecutor! Now you're an enemy of the people and you've got to put your nose to the grindstone!" (However, it appears that the work supervisor intervened on behalf of the prosecutor.)

Now just tell us of a scene like that involving a Tsarist prosecutor in a concentration camp in 1918—no one would have dreamed of taking pity on him; it was unanimously recognized that they were not people. (And the sentences they had sought for the defendants they had prosecuted had been one year, three years, five.) But how was it possible—*not* to take pity on one's own Soviet proletarian prosecutor, even if he was dressed in a woolen suit? (The sentences he had demanded were . . . a *ten-ruble bill* and the *super.*)

To say that things were *painful* for them is to say almost nothing. They were incapable of assimilating such a blow, such a downfall, and from their *own people* too, from their dear Party, and, from all appearances, for nothing at all. After all, they had been guilty of nothing as far as the Party was concerned—nothing at all.

It was painful for them to such a degree that it was considered taboo among them, uncomradely, to ask: "What were you im-

prisoned for?" The only squeamish generation of prisoners! The rest of us, in 1945, with tongues hanging out, used to recount our arrests, couldn't wait to tell the story to every chance newcomer we met and to the whole cell, as if it were an anecdote.

Here's the sort of people they were. Olga Sliozberg's husband had already been arrested, and they had come to carry out a search and arrest her too. The search lasted four hours—and she spent those four hours sorting out the minutes of the congress of Stakhanovites of the bristle and brush industry, of which she had been the secretary until the previous day. The incomplete state of the minutes troubled her more than her children, whom she was leaving forever! Even the interrogator conducting the search could not resist telling her: "Come on now, say farewell to your children!"

Here's the sort of people they were. A letter from her fifteen-year-old daughter came to Yelizaveta Tsvetkova in the Kazan Prison for long-term prisoners: "Mama! Tell me, write to me—are you guilty or not? I hope you weren't guilty, because then I won't join the Komsomol, and I won't forgive them because of you. But if you are guilty—I won't write you any more and will hate you." And the mother was stricken by remorse in her damp gravelike cell with its dim little lamp: How could her daughter live without the Komsomol? How could she be permitted to hate Soviet power? Better that she should hate me. And she wrote: "I am guilty. . . . Enter the Komsomol!"

How could it be anything but hard! It was more than the human heart could bear: to fall beneath the beloved ax—then to have to justify its wisdom.

But that is the price a man pays for entrusting his God-given soul to human dogma.

Even today any orthodox Communist will affirm that Tsvetkova acted correctly. Even today they cannot be convinced that this is precisely the "perversion of small forces," that the mother perverted her daughter and harmed her soul.

Here's the sort of people they were: Y.T. gave sincere testimony against her husband—anything to aid the Party!

Oh, how one could pity them if at least now they had come to comprehend their former wretchedness!

This whole chapter could have been written quite differently if today at least they had forsaken their earlier views!

But it happened the way Mariya Danielyan had dreamed it would: "If I leave here someday, I am going to live as if nothing had taken place."

Loyalty? And in our view it is just plain pigheadedness. These devotees of the theory of development construed loyalty to that development to mean renunciation of any personal development whatsoever. As Nikolai Adamovich Vilenchik said, after serving seventeen years: "We believed in the Party—and we were *not mistaken!*" Is this loyalty or pigheadedness?

No, it was not for show and not out of hypocrisy that they argued in the cells in defense of all the government's actions. They needed ideological arguments in order to hold on to a sense of their own rightness—otherwise insanity was not far off.

How easily one could sympathize with them all! But they all see so clearly what their sufferings were—and they don't see wherein lies their own guilt.

This sort of person was not arrested before 1937. And after 1938 very few such people were arrested. And that is why they were named the "call-up of 1937," and this would be permissible but shouldn't be allowed to blur the overall picture: even at the peak they were not the only ones being arrested, and those same peasants, and workers, and young people, and engineers, and technicians, and agronomists, and economists, and ordinary believers continued to stream in as well.

The "call-up of 1937" was very loquacious, and having access to the press and radio created the "legend of 1937," a legend consisting of two points:

1. If they arrested people at all under the Soviet government, it was only in 1937, and it is necessary to speak out and be indignant only about 1937.
2. In 1937 they were . . . the only ones arrested.

Here's what they write: that terrible year when they arrested the most devoted Communist executives: secretaries of the Central Committees of the Union Republics, secretaries of the Provincial Party Committees; chairmen of the Provincial Executive Committees; all the commanders of the military districts, of corps and divisions, marshals and generals, provincial prosecutors, sec-

retaries of District Party Committees, chairmen of District Executive Committees . . .

At the very beginning of our book we gave a conspectus of the *waves* pouring into the Archipelago during the two decades up to 1937. How long all that dragged on! And how many millions there were! But the future call-up of 1937 didn't bat an eyelid and found it all normal. We do not know what expressions they used in discussing it among themselves, but P. P. Postyshev, unaware that he himself was destined to go the same way, spoke like this:

In 1931, at a conference of justice officials: ". . . while retaining our penal policy in all its severity and cruelty in relation to the class enemy and to déclassé offshoots . . ." (*"Déclassé offshoots"* —how priceless! Just about anybody could be classified as a "déclassé offshoot"!)

In 1932: "It is understandable that . . . in putting them through the crucible of dekulakization . . . we must never lost sight of the fact that this kulak of yesterday has not morally disarmed . . ."

And again: "In no case must the sharp blade of penal policy become dull."

And that blade, Pavel Petrovich, was so sharp! And that crucible so very hot!

R. M. Ger explained it like this: "So long as the arrests involved people who were unknown or scarcely known to me, I and my acquaintances had no doubts about the well-foundedness [!] of those arrests. But when people close to me were arrested and I myself was arrested, and when I encountered dozens of the most loyal Communists in prison, then . . ."

In a word, they remained calm while *society* was being imprisoned. Their "outraged reason boiled" when *their own fellowship* began to be imprisoned. Stalin violated a taboo that appeared firmly established, and that was why they had led such a gay life.

Of course, they were stunned! Of course, it was a fantastic thing to have to grasp! And in the cells they asked heatedly: "Comrades! Do you know whose coup this was? Who seized power in our city?"

And for a long time after, as they became convinced of the irrevocability of their fate, they sighed and groaned: "If only Lenin were alive, this never would have happened!"

(What did they mean by *this?* Was it not precisely *this* that had

happened to the others before them? See Part I, Chapters 8 and 9.)

But nonetheless—they were government people! Enlightened Marxists! Theoreticians! And how did they cope with this ordeal? How did they reprocess and make sense of an historical event not previously digested nor explained in the newspapers? (And historical events always swoop down unexpectedly.)

Dragged roughly for years down a false trail, they offered explanations astonishing in their profundity:

1. It is the very cunning work of foreign intelligence services.

2. It is wrecking on an enormous scale! Wreckers have taken over the NKVD! (A variation on this was: German agents had taken over the NKVD!)

3. It is a plot by local NKVD men.

And in all three cases the message was: that we ourselves were to blame for relaxing our vigilance! Stalin doesn't know anything! Stalin doesn't know about these arrests!! When he finds out, he will destroy them all and free us!!

4. In the ranks of the Party there was terrible treason (but why??); and the entire country is teeming with enemies, and the majority of the people here have been correctly arrested; they aren't Communists but . . . Counter-Revolutionaries—and in the cells you have to take precautions and be careful not to speak in their presence. "I am the only one here who is completely innocent. Well, you too maybe." (This was the variation which was adopted by Mekhanoshin, a former member of the Revolutionary War Council. In other words, let him out, give him his way—and see how many he arrests.)

5. These repressions are an historical necessity for the development of our society. (This was how a few of the theoreticians talked who had not lost their self-possession, as, for example, a professor from the Plekhanov Institute of National Economy. The explanation was a sure one, and one had to admire how quickly and correctly he had understood it—but none of them ever explained what laws they had in mind and they just kept blowing on the same flute from their permanent selection: "the historical necessity of development"—you can spout that nonsense about anything and you'll always be right.)

And in all five variations no one, of course, accused Stalin —he remained an uneclipsed sun![2]

And if one day one of the old Party members, like, for example, Aleksandr Ivanovich Yashkevich, the Byelorussian censor, wheezed from the corner of the cell that Stalin was no right hand of Lenin but a dog, and until he croaked, nothing good would happen—they would hurl themselves on such a person with fists, and hurry to denounce him to their interrogator!

It is impossible to imagine to oneself a Goodthinker who for one moment in a daydream would let out a peep about the death of Stalin.

Right on that level of inquisitive thought is where the year 1937 caught up with the loyalist orthodox Communists! And what kind of an attitude to their trial were they left with? Evidently like Parsons in Orwell's *1984:* "You don't think the Party would arrest an innocent man? . . . 'Thank you,' I'm going to say [to the tribunal], 'thank you for saving me before it was too late!' "

And what way out did they find for themselves? What active decision did their revolutionary theory indicate? Their decision is just as priceless as their explanations! Here is what it is:

The more people that are arrested, the quicker those at the top are going to *understand their mistake!* And therefore . . . one has to try *to name as many names as possible!* One has to give as much fantastic testimony as possible against innocents! *They won't arrest the entire Party!*

(But Stalin didn't need the whole Party. All he needed was its leadership and the members with seniority.)

Just as out of the members of all the Russian parties it was the Communists who turned out to be the *first* to give *false testimony against themselves*[3]—so, too, they were the first to make the merry-go-round discovery: that you should name as many names as possible! Russian revolutionaries had never heard of anything like that!

2. And against the background of these astonishing explanations, that particular one which Narokov (Marchenko) in his novel *Mnimyye Velichiny* (*Imaginary Values*) ascribes to his characters seems psychologically very possible: that all these arrests were simply a show put on to test the true Stalinists. You had to do everything demanded of you and whoever would sign everything without becoming embittered would be promoted substantially later on.

3. Well, perhaps the "Union Bureau of Mensheviks" preceded them, but they, on the basis of their convictions, were almost Bolsheviks.

Was it their shortsightedness that showed itself in this theory? The poverty of their ideas? I sense instinctively that this was not the case, that what moved them here was fear. And that this theory was only a handy camouflage to cover up their weakness. For, after all, they called themselves (long since unlawfully) revolutionaries, but when they looked inside themselves they shuddered: it turned out that they were incapable of standing up to the interrogator. And this "theory" freed them from the necessity of struggling against the interrogator.

They ought to have been able to understand at least this—that for Stalin this purge of the Party was necessary in order to downgrade the Party in comparison with himself (for he himself did not have the genius to rise in comparison with the Party, even such as it was).

Of course, they did not remember how very recently they themselves had helped Stalin destroy the opposition, yes, and even themselves too. After all, Stalin gave his own weak-willed victims the opportunity of taking a chance and rebelling, for this game was not without its satisfactions for him. To arrest each member of the Central Committee required the sanction of all the others! That is something the playful tiger thought up. And while the sham plenums and conferences proceeded, a paper was passed along the rows which stated impersonally that materials had been received compromising a certain individual; and it was requested that consent be given (or refused!) to his expulsion from the Central Committee. (And someone else watched to see whether the person reading this paper held it for a long time.) And they all . . . signed their names. And that was how the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) shot itself. (Stalin had calculated and verified their weakness even earlier than that: once the top level of the Party had accepted as their due high wages, secret provisioning facilities, private sanatoriums, it was already in the trap and there was no way to backtrack.) And *who* made up the Special Assizes that tried Tukhachevsky and Yakir? Blücher! Yegorov! (And S. A. Turovsky.)

And they had forgotten even more (yes, and had never read it anyway) such ancient history as the message of the Patriarch Tikhon to the Council of People's Commissars on October 26, 1918. Appealing for mercy and for the release of the innocent, the staunch Patriarch warned them: "That the blood of all the

prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation." (St. Luke, 11:50.)* And: "... for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." (Matthew, 26:52)* But at that time it seemed absurd, impossible! How could they imagine at that time that History sometimes does know revenge, a sort of voluptuous and delayed justice, but chooses strange forms for it and unexpected executors of its will.

And though, when the young Tukhachevsky returned victorious from suppressing the devastated Tambov peasants, there was no Mariya Spiridonova waiting at the station to put a bullet through his head, it was done sixteen years later by the Georgian priest who never graduated.

And though the curses of the women and children shot in the Crimean spring of 1921, as Voloshin has told us, were incapable of piercing the breast of Bela Kun, this was done by his own comrade in the Third International.

And so it was with Peters, Latsis, Berzin, Agranov, Prokofyev, Balitsky, Artuzov, Chudnovsky, Dybenko, Uborevich, Bubnov, Alafuzo, Alksnis, Arenshtam, Gekker, Gettis, Yegorov, Zhloba, Kovtyukh, Kork, Kutyakov, Primakov, Putna, Y. Sablin, Feldman, R. Eideman; and Unshlickt, Yenukidze, Nevsky, Steklov, Lomov, Kaktyn, Kosior, Rudzutak, Gikalo, Goloded, Shlikhter, Beloborodov, Pyatakov, and Zinoviev. All were executed by the little redheaded butcher. And it would take a patient search on our part to track down now what they had set their hands and signatures to over the fifteen or twenty preceding years.

Fight back? Not one of them tried to fight back. If they say it was difficult to fight back in Yezhov's cells, why didn't they begin to fight the day before their arrest? Was it really unclear where things were going? That means their whole prayer was that they themselves should be bypassed! Why did Ordzhonikidze commit suicide so cravenly? (Or, if he was killed, why did he wait for it?) Why didn't Lenin's faithful companion, Krupskaya, fight back? Why didn't she speak out even once with a public exposé, like the old worker in the Rostov Flax Works? Was she really so afraid of losing her old woman's life? The members of the first Ivanovo-Voznesensk 1905 Soviet of Deputies—Alalykin and Spiridonov—why did they now sign* shameful charges against themselves? And why did Shubin, the representative of that same Soviet of Deputies, sign even more than that—that there had

been no Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet of Deputies in 1905? How was it possible to spit on one's whole life like that?

The Goodthinkers themselves, remembering 1937 now, groan over the injustices and horrors—but no one recalls the possibilities of *fighting back* which existed and which they physically possessed—and which no one made use of. And of course they never will explain it either. Will Yevgeny Yevtushenko, full of energy, take up that task—the true grandson of his grandfather* with precisely the same set of concepts (in his *Autobiography* and in *The Bratsk Power Station*) as those of the call-up of 1937? No, the time for such arguments has passed.

All the wisdom of the imprisoned true believers was merely enough to destroy the traditions of our political prisoners. They avoided their cellmates who thought differently, hid from them, whispered about the horrors of the interrogation in such a way that the non-Party people or, God help us, the SR's, could not hear—"so as not to give them material against the Party."

Yevgeniya Goltsman in the Kazan Prison (1938) was opposed to knocking out signals between cells; as a Communist she was against violating Soviet laws! And when they brought a newspaper, Goltsman insisted that her cellmates read it in full detail, not just superficially!

The prison portion of Y. Ginzburg's memoirs gives us frank testimony on the call-up of 1937. The hard-head Yuliya Annenkova demanded of the cell: "Don't dare make fun of the jailer! *He is the representative here of Soviet power!*" (Well? Everything had turned upside down! Show that little scene in that fairy-tale crystal ball to the unruly revolutionary women in a Tsarist prison!) And the Komsomol member Katya Shirokova asked Ginzburg in the frisking room: "That German Communist woman over there has gold hidden in her hair, but it's our Soviet prison, so shouldn't we tell the jailer?"

And Yekaterina Olitskaya, who traveled to the Kolyma in the same railroad car as Ginzburg, No. 7—this car consisted almost entirely of women Communists—supplements her rich recollections with two astonishing details.

Those who had money gave some of it to buy scallions, and Olitskaya was the person in the car to whom they were handed. With her SR traditions, it never entered her head to do otherwise than divide them up among all forty prisoners. But she was immediately brought up short: "Divide them among the people who

gave the money!" "We can't feed paupers!" "We don't have enough ourselves!" Olitskaya was stupefied: were these politicals? They were women Communists of the 1937 call-up!

And a second episode. In the Sverdlovsk Transit Prison baths these women were driven naked between formations of jailers. Nothing happened, and they were reassured. And in the ensuing stages of their journey they sang in their car:

> I know no other country
> Where a person breathes so freely!

Now it's with that sort of complex of world outlook, it's on that level of consciousness, that the Goodthinkers started on their long camp road. Having understood nothing from the very beginning, neither about their arrest, nor interrogation, nor events in general, out of stubbornness, out of loyalty (or out of desperation?), they would henceforth, throughout the journey, regard themselves as bearers of light, and proclaim themselves as the only ones who understood the essence of things.

Having once made the decision not to notice anything around them and not to draw conclusions, they would then try all the more not to notice what was worst of all for them: how they looked, this newly arrived call-up of 1937, still very decent in clothes, manners, and conversation, to the camp inmates, to the nonpolitical offenders, and to the 58's too. (Any of the dispossessed "kulaks" who had survived was, right then, finishing his first *tenner.*) Here they came, those who used to carry briefcases and look important! Here came those who had gone about in personally assigned automobiles! Here came those who, at the time of ration cards, used to receive provisions from special closed stores! Here came those who got fat at sanatoriums and womanized at resorts! While the rest of us, under the law of "Seven-eighths," were being given ten years in camp for a head of cabbage, for an ear of corn. And so they were hated and told: "Out there in freedom, *you* did *us* in, but here *we* are going to do *you* in!" (But this won't happen. All the orthodox Communists are soon going to get themselves well fixed up.)[4]

4. Y. Ginzburg cites a completely contrary scene. The prison nurse asks: "Is it true that you tried to help the poor people, that you are imprisoned because of the collective farmers?" It is an almost unbelievable question. Perhaps the prison nurse, behind bars, saw nothing at all, and therefore asked such a stupid question. But the collective farmers and the ordinary camp inmates had eyes and they immediately recognized the people who had carried out the monstrous cattle drive of "collectivization."

What does the loyalists' lofty truth consist of? Simply that they do not want to renounce a single one of their former values or accept a single new one. Let life gush over them, surge over them, and even roll over them with wheels—still they won't let it into their heads! They won't accept it, as though it weren't happening at all! This reluctance to change anything inside their own brains, this simple inability to make a critical assessment of their life's experience, is what they pride themselves on! Prison must not influence their world outlook! Camp must not influence it! What they stood upon before, they will continue to stand by now! We . . . are Marxists! We . . . are materialists! How can we possibly change because we landed in prison by sheer chance? (How can our consciousness change if existence changes, if it manifests new aspects of itself? Not for anything! Even if that existence falls through the floor and disappears, it won't determine our consciousness! For, after all, we are materialists! . . .)

That is the extent of their perception of what has happened to them. V. M. Zarin: "I always used to say to myself in camp: just because of fools [i.e., those who had arrested him] I do not intend to quarrel with Soviet power!"

Here is their inevitable moral: I have been imprisoned for nothing and that means I am good, and that all these people around me are enemies and have been imprisoned for good cause.

And here is how their energy is spent: Six and twelve times a year they send off complaints, declarations, and petitions. And what do they write about? What do they scrawl in them? Of course, they swear loyalty to the Great Genius (and without that they won't be released). Of course, they dissociate themselves from those already shot in their case. Of course, they beg to be forgiven and permitted to return to their old jobs at the top. And tomorrow they will gladly accept any Party assignment whatever —even to run this camp! (And the fact that all the complaints and petitions were met with just as thick a shoal of rejections —well, that was because they didn't reach Stalin! He would have understood! He would have forgiven, the benefactor!)

Fine "politicals" they were if they begged the government for . . . forgiveness! Here was the level of their consciousness— General Gorbatov in his memoirs: "The court? What had it done wrong? Someone had given it orders. . . ." Oh, what a profound analysis! And what angelic Bolshevik meekness! The thieves asked Gorbatov: "Why did you get here?" (Incidentally,

Gorbatov has them asking politely, which they would never do!) And Gorbatov replied: "Bad people slandered me." No, what an analysis, really, what an analysis! And the general behaved not like Ivan Denisovich Shukhov, but like Fetyukov instead: he went to clean up the office in the hope of receiving an extra crust of bread for it. "Brushing the crumbs and crusts from the table, and sometimes pieces of bread, I began to satisfy my hunger somewhat better." All right, go on and satisfy it! But Ivan Denisovich is charged with heavy guilt because he thinks about porridge and has no social consciousness, while General Gorbatov can get away with anything because he *thinks* . . . about bad people! (Nonetheless Ivan Denisovich did not go wrong, and he has bolder opinions about what goes on in the country than the general.)

And here is V. P. Golitsyn, son of a district physician, a road engineer; he was imprisoned for 140 (one hundred forty!) days in a death cell (plenty of time to think!). And then he got fifteen years, and after that external exile. "In my mind nothing changed. I was the same non-Party Bolshevik as before. My faith in the Party helped me, the fact that the evil was being done not by the Party and government but by the evil will of *certain people* [what an analysis!] who came and went [but somehow they never seemed to go . . .], but all the rest [!!] remained. . . . And ordinary Soviet people also helped me endure it, of whom in 1937–1938 there were *very many*, both in the NKVD [i.e., in its apparatus!], and in the prisons, and in the camps. Not the 'godfathers' but the real Dzerzhinsky men." (This surpasses all understanding: those Dzerzhinsky men, of whom there were so many—what were they doing there, just looking on at the crimes of *certain people?* Yet they did not get involved in these crimes themselves? Though at the same time they survived? Miracles . . . !)

Or Boris Dyakov: "I suffered Stalin's death with acute pain." (Was he alone? All the orthodox Communists felt the same.) It seemed to him as if all hopes for release had faded! . . .[5]

But people are shouting at me: "That's dishonest! Dishonest! You must argue with real theoreticians! From the Institute of Red Professors!"

All right; as you will! As if I'd not done it before! What else

5. *Oktyabr*, 1964, No. 7.

was I doing in prison? And on prison transports? And at transit prisons? At first I argued alongside them, taking their side. But somehow our arguments seemed to me too thin. And at that point I began to keep silent and just listen. And then I argued against them. Yes, even Zakharov himself, the teacher of Malenkov (and he was very proud—of having been Malenkov's teacher too), even he condescended to debate with me.

And here's what: All those arguments seem in retrospect to have coalesced into one argument in my head. It is as if all these dogmatists taken together had been rolled into . . . one person. Time after time he would advance the very same argument in the same words at the same point. And would be equally impenetrable—impenetrability, that was their chief trait! Armor-piercing shells for iron-heads have not yet been invented! In arguing with them, you wear yourself out, unless you accept in advance that the argument is simply a game, a jolly pastime.

My friend Panin* and I are lying on the middle shelf of a Stolypin compartment and have set ourselves up comfortably, tucked our salt herring in our pockets so we don't need water and can go to sleep. But at some station or other they shove into our compartment . . . a Marxist scholar! We can even tell this from his goatee and spectacles. He doesn't hide the fact: he is a former professor of the Communist Academy. We hang head down in the square cutout—and from his very first words we see that he is: impenetrable. But we have been serving time for a long while and have a long time left to serve, and we value a merry joke. We must climb down to have a bit of fun! There is ample space in the compartment, and so we exchange places with someone and crowd in:

"Hello."

"Hello."

"You're not too crowded?"

"No, it's all right."

"Have you been in the jug a long time?"

"Long enough."

"Are you past the halfway mark?"

"Just."

"Look over there: how poverty-stricken our villages are—straw thatch, crooked huts."

"An inheritance from the Tsarist regime."

"Well, but we've already had thirty Soviet years."

"That's an insignificant period historically."

"It's terrible that the collective farmers are starving."

"But have you looked in *all* their ovens?"

"Just ask any collective farmer in our compartment."

"Everyone in jail is embittered and prejudiced."

"But I've seen collective farms myself."

"That means they were uncharacteristic."

(The goatee had never been in any of them—that way it was simpler.)

"Just ask the old folks: under the Tsar they were well fed, well clothed, and they used to have so many holidays."

"I'm not even going to ask. It's a subjective trait of human memory to praise everything about the past. The cow that died is the one that gave twice the milk. [Sometimes he even cited proverbs!] And our people don't like holidays. They like to work."

"But why is there a shortage of bread in many cities?"

"When?"

"Right before the war, for example."

"Not true! Before the war, in fact, everything had been worked out."

"Listen, at that time in all the cities on the Volga there were queues of thousands of people. . . ."

"Some local failure in supply. But more likely your memory is failing you."

"But there's a shortage now!"

"Old wives' tales. We have from seven to eight billion poods of grain."[6]

"And the grain itself is rotten."

"Not at all. We have been successful in developing new varieties of grain."

"But in many shops the shelves are empty."

"Inefficient distribution in local areas."

"Yes, and the prices are high. The workers have to do without many things."

"Our prices are more scientifically based than anywhere else."

"That means wages are low."

6. And not so soon afterward Khrushchev would discover that in 1952 less breadgrain was being harvested than in 1913.

"And the wages, too, are scientifically based."

"That means they're based in such a way that the worker works for the state for free the greater part of his time."

"You don't know anything about economics. What is your profession?"

"Engineer."

"And I am an economist. Don't argue. Surplus value is even impossible here."

"But why is it that the father of a family used to be able to feed his family by his own labor, and that now two or three in the family have to work?"

"Because there was unemployment previously, and the wife couldn't get work. And the family went hungry. Furthermore, the wife's working is important for her equality."

"What the devil do you mean by equality? And who does all the household work?"

"The husband has to help."

"And how about you—did you help your wife?"

"I am not married."

"So each of them used to work during the day, and now both of them have to work in the evenings too. And the woman has no time for the main thing—for bringing up the children."

"She has quite enough. They are mainly brought up by the kindergarten, school, and Komsomol."

"Well, and how are they bringing them up? They grow up to be hooligans and petty thieves and the girls . . . run free and loose."

"Not at all. Our youth have lofty principles."

"That's what the papers say. But our papers tell lies!"

"They are much more honest than the bourgeois newspapers! You ought to read the bourgeois newspapers."

"Just give me the chance!"

"That's not necessary at all."

"And our newspapers still tell lies!"

"They are openly bound to the proletariat."

"That's the kind of bringing up that makes the crime rate grow."

"On the contrary, it's falling. Give me the statistics."

(This in a country where even the number of sheep tails is classified as a secret!)

"And another reason our crime rate is rising is that our laws themselves give rise to crime. They are ferocious and ridiculous."

"On the contrary, they are fine laws. The finest in the history of humanity."

"Especially Article 58."

"Without it our young state would not have been able to hold out."

"It's no longer so very young!"

"Historically speaking it is very young."

"But look around at the number of people imprisoned."

"They got what they deserved."

"And what about you?"

"I was jailed by mistake. They will sort things out and release me."

(They all leave themselves this loophole.)

"By mistake? Then what kind of laws do we have?"

"The laws are excellent, it is the deviations from them that are unfortunate."

"Everywhere there is graft, bribes, corruption."

"We have to intensify our Communist upbringing."

And so forth. He is imperturbable. He speaks in a language which requires no effort of the mind. And arguing with him is like walking through a desert.

It's about people like that that they say: "He made the rounds of all the smithies and came home unshod."

And when they write in their obituaries: "perished tragically during the period of the cult," this should be corrected to read: "perished comically."

But if his fate had worked out differently, we would never have learned what a dry, insignificant little man he was. We would have respectfully read his name in the newspaper. He would have become a people's commissar or even ventured to represent all Russia abroad.

To argue with him was useless. It was much more interesting to play with him . . . no, not at chess, but at the game of "comrades." There really is such a game. It is a very simple game. Just play up to him a couple of times or so, use some of his own pet words and phrases. He will like it. For he has grown accustomed to find that all around him . . . are enemies. He has become

weary of snarling and doesn't like to tell his stories because all those stories will be twisted around and thrown right back in his face. But if he takes you for one of his own, he will quite humanly disclose to you what he has just seen at the station: People are passing by, talking, laughing, life goes on. The Party is providing leadership, people are being moved from job to job. Yet you and I are languishing here in prison, there are a handful of us, and we must *write* and write petitions, begging a review of our cases, begging for a pardon. . . .

Or else he will tell you something interesting: In the Communist Academy they decided to *devour* one comrade; they felt he wasn't quite genuine, *not one of our own;* but somehow they couldn't manage it: there were no errors in his essays, and his biography was clean. Then all of a sudden, going through the archives, what a find! They ran across an old brochure written by this comrade which Vladimir Ilyich Lenin himself had held in his hands and in the margin of which he had written in his own handwriting the notation: "As an economist he is shit." "Well, now, you understand," our companion smiled confidentially, "that after *that* it was no trouble at all to make short work of that muddlehead and impostor. He was expelled from the Academy and deprived of his scholarly rank."

The railroad cars go clicking along. Everyone is already asleep, some lying down, some sitting up. Sometimes a convoy guard passes along the corridor, yawning.

And one more unrecorded episode from Lenin's biography is lost from *view*. . . .

■

For a complete picture of the loyalists we must inquire into their conduct in all the basic areas of camp life.

A. *Attitude toward the Camp Regimen and toward the Prisoners' Struggle for Their Rights.* Inasmuch as the camp regimen has been established *by us*, the Soviet government, it must be observed not only willingly but conscientiously. The *spirit* of the regimen has to be observed even before this is demanded or requested by the supervisors.

There are some astonishing observations in the work of that

same Y. Ginzburg: The women *justify* the cropping of their own hair (with clippers)! (Since the prison regimen requires it.) From a closed prison they were sent to die in the Kolyma. And they had their own explanation already prepared: "That means they *trust* us, that we will work there conscientiously!"

And what the devil is the point of talking about any kind of *struggle?* Struggle against whom? Against *our own people?* Struggle—for what? For our personal release? For that you don't need to struggle, you have to ask according to rules. A struggle for the overthrow of the Soviet government? Shut your mouth!

Among the camp inmates were those who wanted to struggle but could not, those who could but didn't want to, those who both could and wanted to (and did! when the time comes, we will tell about them too!). The orthodox Communists represented a fourth group: those who didn't want to and *couldn't* even if they had wanted to. All their preceding life had prepared them only for an artificially conditioned environment. Their "struggle" out in freedom had consisted in adopting and transmitting resolutions and instructions already approved by their higher-ups with the help of the telephone and the electric bell. In camp conditions where the struggle most frequently was hand-to-hand, with unarmed prisoners marching against machine pistols, crawling on their bellies under fire, they were the "Sidor Polikarpoviches" or the "Dill Tomatoviches," frightening no one and good for nothing.

And even less did these principled warriors for universal human happiness offer any hindrance to the depredations of the thieves, nor did they object to the dominance of the thieves in the kitchens and among the trusties. (Just read General Gorbatov. You can find it there.) For it was on the basis of *their* theory that the socially friendly thieves got such vast power in camp. They didn't prevent the thieves from plundering weak zeks in their presence, and they themselves did not resist being plundered by them.

And all this was completely logical, there were no loose ends lying about, and no one disputed it. But then the time came to write our history, and the first half-stifled voices were raised about life in the camps, and the Goodthinkers looked back and were pained: how could that be? They who were so progressive, so conscientious—and they had not struggled! And they had not

even known that there was a personality cult of Stalin![7] And they certainly hadn't supposed that dear Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria was an inveterate enemy of the people!

And they had to hasten to spread some kind of muddied version to the effect that *they had struggled.* And all the snarling dogs on magazines who felt up to it blamed my Ivan Denisovich, the son-of-a-bitch, for not waging a struggle. *Moskovskaya Pravda* (December 8, 1962) even reproached Ivan Denisovich for not going to the underground meetings arranged by the Communists in camp, claiming he was unwilling to learn from thinking people.

But what kind of delirium is this? What underground meetings? And why? To show the finger inside their pockets? And at whom would they have shown that finger—if from the junior jailer right on up to Stalin himself, one and all were that same Soviet power? So when and *with what methods* did they struggle?

No one can tell us that.

And *what were they thinking about* then—if all they allowed themselves to do was keep repeating that "everything that is real is rational"? What were they thinking of if their entire prayer was: "Do not beat me, please, O whip of the Tsar!"

B. *Relationship to the Camp Administration.* What kind of attitude other than the most respectful and friendly could the *Goodthinkers* have toward the camp chiefs? After all, the camp chiefs were all Party members and were carrying out the Party's directives, and it was not their fault that "I" ("I" = the one and only innocent) had been sentenced and sent here. The orthodox Communists understood quite well that if they themselves had suddenly turned up in the position of the camp chief they would have done everything just as he did.

Todorsky, whom today our whole press has proclaimed a camp hero (he is a former seminarist who became a journalist, singled out by Lenin, and by the thirties for some reason installed as the Chief of the Air Force [?] Academy, though he was not a flier), would even, according to Dyakov's account, talk to the

7. In 1957 the head of the personnel department of the Ryazan Province Education Department asked me: "What were you arrested for in 1945?" "For speaking out against the cult of personality," I replied. "How can that be?" She was astonished. "Was there a cult of personality *then?*" (She was seriously under the impression that the cult of personality had been proclaimed only in 1956. So how could it have been there in 1945?)

supply chief (whom a slogger would pass without a glance) like this: "How can I serve you, Citizen Chief?"

For the chief of the Medical Section Todorsky composed a synopsis of the *Short Course* of Party history. If Todorsky ever had any *thoughts* in the least unlike those in the *Short Course*, then where were his principles, how could he compose a synopsis exactly according to Stalin?[8] And if he really thought *precisely like that*, then that's what is called "perished comically."

But it is too little to love one's camp bosses! What is required is that the bosses love you. It is necessary to explain to the chiefs that we are of the same stuff as you, and you have to take care of us somehow. And this is why the heroes of Serebryakova, Shelest, Dyakov, Aldan-Semyonov on every occasion, whether necessary or not, whether convenient or not, when the prisoner transport is being received, when the names are read out from the lists, declare themselves Communists. That is their application for a cozy spot!

Shelest even thinks up a scene like this. At the Kotlas Transit Prison the roll is being called. "Party member?" asks the chief. (What fools is he writing this for? Where in a prison list is there a column for Party membership?) "Member of the Communist Party of Bolsheviks," replies Shelest to the faked question.

And one has to give the chiefs their due, Dzerzhinsky men or Beria men: they *heard*. And . . . they arranged things for them. Yes, and were there not perhaps some written or at least oral directives: to make things easier for the Communists? For even in periods of the sharpest persecutions of the 58's, when they were being ousted from all jobs as trusties, former big-shot Communists for some reason kept their places. (For example, in Kraslag. Former member of the Military Council of the North Caucasus Military District Aralov remained as brigadier of the vegetable gardeners, and former General Ivanchik remained as a brigadier for cottages, and former secretary of the Moscow Committee Dedkov also kept a soft spot.) But even without any directive, plain solidarity and plain self-interest—"You today, me tomorrow"—were bound to compel the MVD men to look after the true believers.

8. They will object: Principles are principles, but sometimes it is necessary to be elastic. There was a period when Ulbricht and Dimitrov instructed their Communist Parties to make peace with the Nazis and even support them. Well, we have nothing to top that: that's *dialectics!*

And the way it turned out was that the chiefs kept the orthodox Communists at their right hand so that they constituted a firmly established privileged stratum in camp. (But this did not extend to the quiet rank-and-file Communists who did not go to the chiefs to trumpet their faith.)

Aldan-Semyonov writes quite straightforwardly that the Communist camp chiefs tried to transfer Communist prisoners to lighter work. And Dyakov doesn't conceal it either: The newcomer Rom announced to the chief of the hospital that he was an Old Bolshevik. And right away he was assigned as a Medical Section clerk—an enviable post! And the camp chief also gave orders that Todorsky was not to be removed from his post as a medical orderly.

But the most remarkable case of all is recounted by G. Shelest in his *Kolyma Notes*:[9] A new MVD big shot arrived there and recognized the prisoner Zaborsky as his former corps commander from the Civil War. They wept on meeting. Go ahead, ask half my kingdom! And Zaborsky agreed to accept "special food from the kitchen and to take as much bread as he needed" (in other words, to eat the bread of the sloggers, since no one was going to prescribe a new ration norm for him), and asked only to be given a six-volume set of Lenin to read in the evening by the light of the kerosene lamp! And that is how everything was arranged; during the day he was fed with stolen rations; in the evening he read Lenin! And that is how openly and with enjoyment vileness is glorified!

Shelest writes about some kind of mythical "underground politburo" of the work brigade (a bit too big a deal, wasn't it, for a work brigade?), which managed to get hold of a loaf of bread from the bread-cutting room after hours, as well as a bowl of oatmeal. And what that means is that we have our own trusties everywhere. And also: Let's swipe what we can, Goodthinkers?

That very same Shelest gives us his final conclusion:

"Some survived thanks to *their strength of spirit* [those were those orthodox Communists swiping bread and cereal—A.S.], while others survived thanks to an extra bowl of oatmeal [that was Ivan Denisovich]."[10]

9. *Znamya* (*The Banner*), 1964, No. 9.
10. *Zabaikalsky Rabochi* (*Trans-Baikal Worker*), August 27, 1964.

Well, so be it. Ivan Denisovich had no friends among the trusties. Just tell us one thing: Who laid the bricks, who laid the bricks in the wall? Was it you, you hard-heads?

C. *Attitude toward Labor.* It appears that on the whole the orthodox Communists were devoted to work. (Eikhe's deputy, even in a typhoid delirium, could calm down only when the nurse assured him that, yes, the telegrams on grain procurements had already been sent.) It appears that on the whole they approved of camp labor also; it was necessary to the building of Communism, and without it the issuing of gruel to the whole horde of prisoners would have been undeserved. Therefore they considered it quite rational that persons refusing to go out to work should be beaten and imprisoned in the punishment block and shot in wartime. They considered it quite moral to be a work assigner, a brigadier, any kind of cattle driver or whip cracker. (And in this regard they disagreed with the so-called "honest thieves" and were in agreement with the "bitches.")

Take, for example, the brigadier of the logging brigade Yelena Nikitina, a former secretary of the Kiev Komsomol Committee. Here is what they say about her: She stole from the output of her own brigade (of 58's) and traded it with the thieves. Lyusya Dzhaparidze (daughter of a Baku Commissar) bought her way out of work from Nikitina with chocolate received in a food parcel. On the other hand, this woman brigadier refused to let the Anarchist Tatyana Garasyeva leave the woods for three days—until she had frostbite.

Take Prokhorov-Pustover, also a Bolshevik, though not a Party member, who turned in zeks for deliberately failing to fulfill norms. (He used to report this to the chiefs, and the zeks got punished.) To the zeks' reproaches that he must realize it was slave labor, Pustover replied: "That's a strange philosophy! In capitalist countries the workers struggle against slave labor; but we, even if we are slaves, work for a socialist state, not for private persons. These officials are only temporarily [?] in power. One blow from the people . . . and they will disappear, but the people's state will remain."

It's . . . a jungle, the consciousness of an orthodox Communist. It's impossible to make sense of it.

And the only exception the Goodthinkers make is this reserva-

tion for themselves: It would be wrong to use them on general camp work, since it would then be difficult for them to preserve themselves for the future fertile leadership of the Soviet people. And anyway it would also be difficult for them *to think* during those years in camp, in other words to repeat in turn, one after another while gathered in a circle, that Comrade Stalin, Comrade Molotov, Comrade Beria, and all the rest of the Party were right.

And therefore, using all their efforts under the protection of the camp chiefs and with each other's secret help, they tried to get themselves places as trusties—in jobs where no knowledge or skills were required (none of them was a specialist), in calm and quiet places farther from the main hand-to-hand camp struggle. And so they grabbed hold: Zakharov (Malenkov's teacher)—as storage room clerk for personal property; the above-mentioned Zaborsky (Shelest himself?)—at the clothing-issue desk; the notorious Todorsky—in the Medical Section; Konokotin—as a medical assistant (though he was not a medical assistant at all); Serebryakova—as a nurse (though she was no nurse at all). And Aldan-Semyonov was also a trusty.

The camp biography of Dyakov—the biggest loud-mouth of all the loyalists—has been depicted by his own pen and is truly astonishing. During the five years of his sentence he contrived to leave the camp compound *just once*—and then for only half a day, and during that half-day he worked for half an hour, cutting branches, and then the jailer said to him: "You're fagged out, take a rest!" Half an hour in five years—not everyone gets away with that! For a certain length of time he *malingered* on the pretext of a rupture, and subsequently a fistula resulting from the rupture—but listen here, not for five years! To receive such golden jobs as medical statistician, librarian of the Cultural and Educational Section, and storage room clerk for personal possessions, and to stay in such jobs for your *entire term*—a bribe of fat bacon wasn't enough; most likely you had to sell your soul to the "godfather" as well. Let the old camp veterans be the judge of this. And Dyakov was not merely a trusty but an aggressive trusty; in the first version of his story,[11] before he was publicly shamed for it,[12] he elegantly explained why an intelligent person

11. *Zvezda*, 1963, No. 3.
12. Lakshin in *Novy Mir*, 1964, No. 1.

ought to avoid the crude lot of the people ("a chess tactic," "castling"—i.e., setting someone else in the forefront of the battle). And this is the person who has now taken it upon himself to become the principal interpreter of camp life!

G. Serebryakova reports to us on her own camp biography with careful omissions. There are said to be serious witnesses against her. I did not have the opportunity of checking this.

Not only the authors themselves, but *all the rest* of the loyalists are also portrayed by this chorus of authors as being *outside manual labor*—either in the hospital or in trusty jobs where they carry on their obscurantist (although somewhat updated) conversations. These writers are not telling lies; they simply didn't have enough imagination to show those hard-heads engaged in labor useful to society. (How can you portray it if you never worked yourself?!)

D. *Attitude toward Escapes.* The hard-heads themselves never attempted to escape; you see, that would have been an act of struggle against the regime, a dislocation of the MVD, in other words an act of subversion of Soviet power. Furthermore, every orthodox Communist always had two or three petitions for pardon traveling around in the highest appeals jurisdictions. And an escape might be interpreted there, at the top, as lack of patience, even as lack of confidence, in the highest jurisdictions.

Anyway, the Goodthinkers *didn't need* "freedom in general." They didn't need the ordinary common freedom of humans and birds. Every truth is concrete! And the only freedom they needed was freedom given them by the state, lawful freedom, duly signed and sealed, with a return to their prearrest situation and privileges! Without that what use was freedom?

Well, and if they themselves didn't try to escape, then all the more did they condemn the escapes of others as pure subversion of the MVD system and of economic construction.

And if escapes were so detrimental, then it was probably the civic duty of a loyal Communist, on learning of an escape attempt, to denounce it to the comrade security chief? Was it not logical?

True, there were one-time members of the underground among them, and bold people from the Civil War! But their dogma had transformed them into . . . political riffraff.

E. *Attitude toward the Rest of the 58's.* They never mingled with their comrades in distress. This would have been non-Party conduct. Sometimes in secret among themselves, and sometimes quite openly too (for there was no risk in it for them), they opposed themselves to the dirty 58's and attempted to regain purity by holding themselves apart. It was precisely this simple-hearted mass that they had led out in freedom—where they never allowed it to utter a free word. And now when they turned out to be in the same cells with them, on equal terms, they still weren't in the least depressed by it and shouted as much as they pleased: "That's what you deserve, scoundrels! You were all pretending out there in freedom! You are all enemies and they were right to arrest you! Everything is in order. And everything is progressing toward the great victory!" (*I* am the only one unjustly imprisoned.)

And the loyalists seriously ascribed to the strength of the all-conquering teaching the absence of any resistance to the path of their prison monologues (because the administration was always on the side of the orthodox Communists, and the KR's did not even dare raise an objection since otherwise they would get second terms), to the strength of the all-conquering doctrine.[13]

It was with frank contempt, with commanding class hatred, that the orthodox Communists gazed around them at all the 58's except themselves. Dyakov: "I thought with horror, 'Who are we among here?' " Konokotin didn't want to give an injection to a sick Vlasov man (though as a medical assistant it was his duty). But he self-sacrificingly contributed blood for a sick convoy guard. (Just like their free doctor Barinov: "First of all I am a Chekist, and *then* I am a physician." Now that is medicine!) Now we understand why "honest people are required" in the hospital (Dyakov)—so as to know who to inject and who not.

And they transformed this hatred into action (how could they and why should they keep this class hatred to themselves?). In Shelest's account, Samuil Gendal, a professor—probably of Communist jurisprudence—provided the ammunition when the lack

13. Well, it could happen now and then that there was a different relationship of forces. A certain prosecutor, imprisoned in Unzhlag, had to pretend to be an idiot, and for more than a year too. That was his only means of saving himself from reprisals (he was imprisoned along with his "godchildren").

of any desire to go out to work on the part of the Caucasian nationalities became apparent: the Moslem mullah must be suspected of sabotage.

F. *Attitude toward Stool Pigeons.* Just as all roads lead to Rome, so all the preceding points lead us to this one: it was impossible for the hard-heads not to cooperate with the best and most sincere of the camp chiefs—the security chief. In their situation this was the most reliable method of helping the NKVD, the state, and the Party.

In addition it was very profitable. It was the best way of getting together with the higher-ups. Services rendered to the "godfather" did not go unrewarded. The only means of sticking for years on end in the best trusty soft spots inside the camp compound was with the help of the "godfather."

In one of the books about camp from this same orthodox Communist wave[14] here is the camp system of values of the positive Communist Kratov, who is the author's favorite: (1) Survive at any price, adapting to everything. (2) It is better for decent people to become stool pigeons—because it's better than to leave it to scoundrels.

But even if some orthodox Communist got stubborn and chose not to work for the "godfather," it was still hard for him to avoid that door. The security chief would certainly not omit to offer an affectionate invitation to all true believers, who loudly proclaimed their faith, asking in a fatherly tone: "Are you a Soviet person?" And the loyalist could not answer "No," and that meant "Yes."

And if the answer was "Yes," then come and collaborate, comrade. There is nothing to hinder you.[15]

Only now, when distorting the entire history of the camps, are they ashamed to admit their collaboration. Not all of them got caught red-handed, like Liza Kotik, who dropped a written denunciation. But now someone has blurted out that security officer Sokovikov used to send off Dyakov's letters for him, bypassing the camp censor, and the only thing unsaid is: *In exchange for what* did he send them? That kind of friendship—

14. Viktor Vyatkin, *Chelovek Rozhdayetsya Dyazhdy* (*Man Is Born Twice*), Part II, Magadan, 1964.

15. Ivanov-Razumnik recalls that they managed to expose three stoolies in their Butyrki cell, and all three turned out to be Communists.

whence came it? They remember to report that the security officer Yakovlev advised Todorsky not to declare himself a Communist openly, but they don't go on to explain why he was concerned about this.

But this is only temporary. Already at hand is that glorious time when people will be able to fling restraint to the winds and admit loudly: "Yes! We . . . were *stoolies* and we are proud of it!"[16]

However—why this whole chapter? Why this whole lengthy survey and analysis of the loyalists? Instead we shall just write in letters a yard high:

JANOS KADAR and WLADYSLAW GOMULKA[17]

They both underwent unjust arrest and interrogation with torture, and both of them served time so-and-so many years.

And the whole world sees how much they learned. The whole world has learned what they are worth.

16. I wrote this at the beginning of 1966, and at the end of that same year I read Bukovsky's essay in *Oktyabr* magazine, No. 9. Just as I predicted—they are already bragging openly.

17. And now we can add also **Gustav Husak.** (1972 footnote.)

Chapter 12

Knock, Knock, Knock . . .

The Cheka-GB (no doubt a resonant, convenient, and concise name for this organization and one which also preserves its continuity in time) would be an insensate log incapable of carrying out surveillance over its people if it did not have a constant eye and a constant ear. In our technological years cameras and photoelectric elements often work in place of eyes, and microphones, tape recorders, and laser listening devices often replace ears. But for the entire epoch covered by this book almost the only eyes and almost the only ears of the Cheka-GB were *stool pigeons.*

In the early years of the Cheka they were called, in a businesslike manner, secret collaborators (in contrast to staff employees who were in the open). In the manner of those years this was abbreviated to the term *seksoty,** and that is how it passed into general usage. Whoever thought up this word (not supposing it would become so widely disseminated—and not taking due care) did not have the gift of perceiving it with unprejudiced ear and hearing even in its mere sound the loathsomeness woven into it —something more disreputable even than sodomy. And over the years it became colored with the yellowish-brown blood of betrayal—and there was no nastier word in the whole Russian language.

But this word was used only in freedom. In the Archipelago they had their own words: in prison it was a "nasedka"—a "sitting hen"—and in camp it was a "stukach"—a "knocker"—stool pigeons all. However, just as many words of the Archipelago subsequently moved out into the whole range of the Russian

language and took over the entire country, so too the word "knocker" became in time a common concept. This reflected both the unity and the universality of the phenomenon itself.

Without having the experience and without having thought the matter over sufficiently, it is difficult to evaluate the extent to which we are permeated and enveloped by stool-pigeoning. Just as, without a transistor in hand, we do not sense in a field, in a forest, or on a lake that multitudes of radio waves are constantly pouring through us.

It is difficult to school oneself to ask that constant question: *Who is the stool pigeon among us?* In our apartment, in our courtyard, in our watch-repair shop, in our school, in our editorial office, in our workshop, in our design bureau, and even in our police. It is difficult to school oneself, and it is repulsive to become schooled—but for safety one must. It is impossible to expel the stoolies or to fire them—they will recruit new ones. But you have to *know* them—sometimes in order to beware of them; sometimes to put on an act in their presence, to pretend to be something you aren't; sometimes in order to quarrel openly with the informer and by this means devalue his testimony against you.

We will speak in a special chapter on *freedom* about the density of the network of informers. Many sense this density, but they do not make the effort to imagine the informer's face—his simple human face. And for this reason the network seems more enigmatic and more fearsome than in actual fact it is. And yet the informer is that very same pleasant Anna Fyodorovna who lives next door and came in to ask you for some yeast and then ran to report at a prearranged contact point (perhaps a shop or a drugstore) that an unregistered visitor is in your apartment. It is that very same Ivan Nikiforovich whom you like so much, with whom you drank a glass of vodka, and he reported that you cursed because there was nothing in the store to buy and said the higher-ups were getting it all under the counter. You don't know informers face to face, and then you are surprised that the omnipresent Organs could know that during the mass singing of the "Song on Stalin" you merely opened your mouth and didn't waste your voice? Or that you didn't enjoy yourself at the November 7 demonstration? Well, where were they, those penetrating and burning informer's eyes? But the informer's eyes can be

a languid blue or hold a senile tear. It is not at all necessary for them to gleam wickedly. Do not expect that he will always be a villain who looks repulsive. He is an ordinary human being like you and me with a measure of good feelings, a measure of malice and envy, and with all the weaknesses which make us vulnerable to spiders. If the recruitment of stool pigeons were entirely voluntary and based on enthusiasm, there would be few of them (as it was perhaps in the twenties). But the recruitment proceeds by means of entanglement and capture, and his weaknesses are what betray a person into this shameful service. And even those who honestly want to rid themselves of this sticky spiderweb, this second skin . . . just can't, just can't.

Recruitment is in the very air of our country. In the fact that what belongs to the state is higher than what belongs to the individual. That Pavlik Morozov is a hero. That a denunciation is not a denunciation but *a help* to the person denounced. Recruitment is interlaced with ideology: for if the Organs wish it, then the recruited person must also wish for one and the same thing: our country's successful advance to socialism.

The technical side of recruitment is beyond praise. Alas, our detective comics do not describe these methods. The recruiters work at propaganda centers before elections. The recruiters work on the faculties of Marxism-Leninism. They call you in—"There's some kind of commission there, go on in." The recruiters work in army units barely back from the front lines; a SMERSH man comes, and *jerks in* half your company one at a time; with some he merely talks about the grits and the weather, but some he assigns to keep watch on each other and on their commanders. A craftsman is sitting in his den repairing leather goods. A friendly man enters: "Could you fix this buckle for me?" And quietly he adds: "You are to shut down your shop right now and go out on the street. There is an automobile there with license number 37–48. Open the door without hesitation and get in. It will take you where you are to go." (And when you get there, the whole thing is routine: "Are you a Soviet person? In that case you must *help* us.") And a shop like that is a wonderful place for gathering denunciations from citizens! And for a personal meeting with the Security chief there is the Sidorov apartment, second floor, three rings, from 6 to 8 P.M.

The poetry of recruitment of stool pigeons still awaits its artist.

There is a visible life and there is an invisible life. The spiderwebs are stretched everywhere, and as we move we do not notice how they wind about us.

Selecting tools available for recruitment is like selecting master keys: No. 1, No. 2, No. 3. No. 1: "Are you a Soviet person?" No. 2 is to promise that which the person being recruited has fruitlessly sought by lawful means for many years. No. 3 is to bring pressure to bear on some weak point, to threaten a person with what he fears most of all. No. 4 . . .

You see, it only takes a tiny bit of pressure. A certain A.G. is called in, and it is well known that he is a nincompoop. And so to start he is instructed: "Write down a list of the people you know who have anti-Soviet attitudes." He is distressed and hesitates: "I'm not sure." He didn't jump up and didn't thump the table: "How dare you!" (Who does in our country? Why deal in fantasies!) "Aha, so you are not sure? Then write a list of people you can guarantee are one hundred percent Soviet people! But *you are guaranteeing*, you understand? If you provide even one of them with false references, you yourself will *go to prison* immediately. So why aren't you writing?" "Well, I . . . can't guarantee." "Aha, you can't? That means you know they are anti-Soviet. So write down immediately the ones you know about!" And so the good and honest rabbit A.G. sweats and fidgets and worries. He has too soft a soul, formed before the Revolution. He has sincerely accepted this pressure which is bearing down on him: Write either that they are Soviet or that they are anti-Soviet. He sees no third way out.

A stone is not a human being, and even stones get crushed.

There are more master keys in freedom because life is more varied. In camp they are of the simplest sort. Life has been simplified, laid bare, and the threading of the screw and the diameter of its head are well known. No. 1, of course, remains: "Are you a Soviet person?" It is very applicable to the loyalists, and the screwdriver will never slip, and the screw head starts immediately and keeps going. No. 2 also works very well indeed: a promise to have the prisoner taken off general work and to have trusty work arranged for him in the camp compound and to see that he gets supplementary grits, and some pay, and has his term reduced. That's all life. And every such little step preserves life! (During the war years *stool-pigeoning* really got to be conspicuously small-time stuff; objects got more expensive and people

got cheaper. Souls were *sold* for just a pack of tobacco.) And No. 3 works even better: We will take your trusty status away! We will send you out to general work! We will transfer you to a penalty camp! Every one of those steps was a step toward death. And the person who could not be coaxed upward by a piece of bread could still shudder and beg for mercy if he was pushed into the abyss.

This does not mean that finer, more skillful work did not exist or was never needed—great ingenuity was sometimes required. Major Shikin had to gather material against the prisoner Gertsenberg, a Jew. He had grounds for thinking that Anton, an inexperienced, seventeen-year-old German lad, could provide the material he wanted. Shikin called in young Anton and began to water the Nazi shoots implanted there: how repulsive the Jewish nation was and how it had destroyed Germany. Anton got steamed up and betrayed Gertsenberg. (And why wouldn't the Communist Chekist Shikin have become, under altered circumstances, a dependable interrogator for the Gestapo?)

Or take Aleksandr Fillipovich Stepovoi. Before his arrest he was a soldier in the MVD armies and he had been arrested under Article 58.[1]

He was not an orthodox Communist at all, just an ordinary lad from the working classes. And in camp he came to be

1. This is the only chance I will have to tell the story of his arrest. He was conscripted as a boy and sent off to serve in the MVD armies. First—into battle against the Ukrainian partisans, the "Banderists."* Having received information (from informers) as to when the "Banderists" were coming out of the forest to attend mass, the MVD surrounded the church and took them as they came out. (On the basis of photographs.) Later they also guarded (in civilian clothing) people's deputies in Lithuania when the latter went to election meetings. ("One of them was very bold and always declined to have a guard with him!") Later still they guarded a bridge in Gorky Province. They themselves mutinied over poor food and as punishment were sent to the Turkish border. But by this time Stepovoi had already been imprisoned. He used to draw pictures as a hobby, even on the covers of notebooks in political indoctrination courses. On one occasion he drew a pig, and then someone next to him asked: "Can you draw Stalin?" "I can." And he drew a picture of Stalin on the spot. And he turned in his notebook to be checked by the instructor. That was already quite enough to warrant his arrest, but beyond that, at target practice in the presence of a general he had scored seven out of seven bull's-eyes at a distance of four hundred yards and got leave to go home. When he returned to his unit, he reported there were no fruit trees left. All the orchards had been cut down because of the tax on them imposed by Zverev. At his court-martial in Gorky Province he shouted: "Oh, you scoundrels! If I am an enemy of the people, why don't you try me in front of everyone—what are you hiding from?" Then. . . . Burlepolom and Krasnaya Glinka (a cruel strict-regimen camp consisting only of 58's who worked on tunneling).

ashamed of his former service and carefully concealed it, realizing that it would be dangerous for him if it became known. So how was he to be recruited as an informer? Well, he was to be recruited with just that: "We will let it be known that you are a 'Chekist.' " They would even wipe their asses with their own banner—anything in order to recruit! (He insists that he nonetheless stood up against them.)

Someone else might, as the saying goes, be nothing at all, but merely want to be a stoolie—someone like that could be had without any difficulty. For another it might be necessary to cast the bait several times before he swallowed it. To anyone who wavered and squirmed on the grounds that it was difficult for him to gather exact information, they would explain: "Give us what you have and we will check it out." "But if I'm not at all sure?" "What does that mean—that you're a real enemy?" And in the end they would explain quite honestly: "What we need is five percent truth and the rest can be your imagination." (The Dzhida security chiefs.)

But sometimes it did happen that the "godfather"[2] would keep trying and trying without landing his prey either on his third try or on his fifth. This was rare, but it happened. Then the "godfather" had his spare noose left: a signature on nondisclosure. Nowhere—either in the Constitution or in the Code—did it ever say that such signatures exist or that we are obliged to give them, but . . . we have got used to everything. How can we refuse this either? We certainly will give all of them. (Yet, at the same time, if we didn't give them, if, on crossing the threshold, we were to announce to one and all our conversation with the "godfather," then indeed the demonic strength of the Third Section would be dispelled. It is on our cowardice that their secrecy and they themselves are founded!) And then a liberating and happy notation is put into the prisoner's camp file: "*Not to be recruited.*" That is after try "ninety-six" or at least "eighty-four," but it is a long time before we learn about it, if we survive at all. We can make a guess, however, from the fact that all that scum subsides from us and never clings to us again.

However, most often of all the recruitment succeeds. Crudely

2. The word "kum" in Dal's dictionary is given as meaning "one in a state of *spiritual* kinship, the godfather of one's child by *christening*." And so the transfer of this term to the camp security officer was very precise and quite in the spirit of the language. But with that touch of irony customary with the zeks.

and simply, they put on more and more pressure, so much that you can neither beg nor growl your way out of it.

And soon afterward the new recruit brings in a denunciation.

And as often as not the denunciation tightens the noose of a second term around someone's neck.

And camp squealing turns out to be the strongest form of camp struggle: "You croak today, me tomorrow!"

Out *in freedom* stool-pigeoning was a totally safe occupation for an entire half-century or forty years; there was no answering threat from society, and neither exposure nor punishment could occur.

In the camps it was somewhat different. The reader will recall how the stool pigeons were exposed and exiled to Kondostrov by the Administrative Section of Solovki. But, for decades after, things were seemingly free and easy for the stool pigeons. But at occasional rare intervals and in occasional rare places a small group of resolute and energetic zeks would join forces and continue the Solovetsky tradition in hidden form. Sometimes they would beat up (and kill) a stool pigeon on the pretext of lynch law: a crowd stirred up against a thief caught stealing. (In camp terms lynch law was almost lawful.) Sometimes—as in Camp No. 1 of Vyatlag during the war—the work trusties would expel the most malevolent of the stool pigeons from their own construction project "for the sake of efficiency." It was hard for the security chief to help in that kind of case. Other stool pigeons caught on and clammed up.

High hopes were placed in the front-line soldiers when they arrived—they would go after the stoolies! Alas, the military reinforcements were a disappointment to the camp warriors; outside their army these warriors, artillerymen, and scouts went totally sour and were good for nothing.

But what was required was more tolling of the bell, more passage of time, before the extermination of stoolies would get under way in the Archipelago.

■

I do not have enough material for this chapter. For some reason old camp hands are not very eager to tell me about how they were recruited. I will therefore speak about myself.

Only with my later camp experience, as I became a veteran, did I look back and comprehend how pettily, how insignificantly, I had begun my term. Having become used, in my officer's pelt, to an undeservedly high position among those around me, in camp, too, I kept climbing into positions of some kind and immediately falling out of them. And I clung tightly to that pelt—to my field shirt, britches, greatcoat. How hard I tried not to exchange it for the dark camp camouflage! In new conditions I made the mistake of the new recruit. I drew attention to myself in a new locality.

And the sniper's eye of the very first "godfather," at Novy Iyerusalim, noticed me right off. And at Kaluga Gates also, just as soon as I got out of the painters' brigade and became an assistant to the norm setter, I dragged out that uniform once again—oh, how one wants to be masculine and handsome! Furthermore, I lived in that chamber of monstrosities where even the generals didn't doll up like that.

I had forgotten to wonder about how and why I had written my autobiography in Novy Iyerusalim. One evening I was reading a physics text, half-lying on my cot. Zinovyev was frying something and telling a story. Orachevsky and Prokhorov were lying there with their boots on the foot rail of the cots when in came the senior jailer, named Senin. (Evidently this was not his real name but a camp pseudonym.) He seemed not to notice the hot plate or the boots sticking out there—and he sat down on someone's cot and joined in the general conversation.

I didn't like either his face or his manner, that Senin. He used to flash his soft eyes too much, but he was oh, so cultured! So well-mannered! So different from all the rest of our jailers—boors, incompetents, illiterates. Senin was no more and no less than a *university student!* A fourth-year student, but I simply don't remember in which faculty. He was evidently quite ashamed of his MVD uniform, fearing his fellow students might run into him on the street when he was wearing his blue shoulder boards, and therefore when he came for his duty periods, he put on his uniform at the gatehouse, and when he left, he took it off. (Now here is a contemporary hero for our novelists! Could one imagine a progressive student in Tsarist times moonlighting as a jailer in a prison!) However, cultured or not, it cost him no trouble at all to send an old man scurrying on errands or to hand out three days in punishment block to a slogger.

But he very much liked to conduct an intellectual conversation in our room—so as to show that he understood our delicate souls, and so that we ourselves would value the delicacy of his soul. So it was this time—he was telling us something fresh about the life of the city, something about a new film, and suddenly, imperceptibly to the others, he clearly motioned to me—to go out into the corridor.

I went out, not understanding. After a certain number of polite sentences so it wouldn't be obvious, Senin also got up and came after me. And he instructed me to go immediately to the office of the security officer. The stairway leading there led nowhere else—so one would not run into anyone on it. There sat the old hoot owl.

I had not yet met him. I went with a sinking heart. What was I afraid of? I was afraid of what every camp inmate fears: that he might start to paste a second term on me. Not a year had passed since my interrogation. And everything within me still ached from the mere sight of an interrogator behind a desk. And what if my previous *case* were to be delved into again: a few pages more from my diary, maybe some letters?

Knock, knock, knock.

"Come in."

I opened the door. A small, cozily furnished room, as if it were not in Gulag at all. There was even enough room for a small divan (maybe he was bringing our women in here too) and for a "Philips" radio on a book stand. Its bright-colored little tuning "eye" gleamed and some soft, very pleasant melody was pouring gently out of it. I had become quite unused to such purity of sound and such music. I instantly softened: somewhere life was going on! My Lord, we had grown so used to believing that our own life was life itself, but it was going on somewhere out there, somewhere *out there.*

"Sit down."

On the desk was a lamp beneath a calming shade. The security chief sat in an armchair behind the desk—like Senin, he had that same intelligent, dark-haired, impenetrable appearance. My chair was also semiupholstered. How pleasant it was if only he wouldn't begin to accuse me of anything, if only he wouldn't begin dragging all that old nonsense out again.

But no, his voice was not hostile at all. He asked me in general about my life, how I was feeling, how I was adjusting to the

camp, whether it was comfortable for me in the trusties' room. No, that was not how they began an interrogation. (And where had I heard that beautiful melody?)

And then came a quite natural question—it could even have been out of just plain curiosity:

"Well, and after everything that has happened to you, after everything you have suffered, are you still a Soviet person? Or not?"

Well? What could I answer? You, my descendants, will never be able to understand this: what should I answer now? I hear, yes, I can hear you normal, free people, shouting at me from 1990: "Go ahead and send him to ———! [Or perhaps my descendants will no longer express themselves in that kind of language? I think—in Russia—they will!] So they imprisoned you, they cut your throat, and they still want you to be a Soviet person!"

In actual fact, after all my prisons, after all my encounters with others, when I was engulfed with information from the whole world—how on earth could I still be a Soviet person? Where and when has anything Soviet ever been able to withstand completeness of information?

And if I had already been *re-educated* as much by prison as I had been *educated* by it, I ought to have cut him off then and there, of course: "No! Go to ———! I'm tired of beating my brains out over you! Let me rest after work!"

But then we had all grown up to be obedient fellows! After all, when it came to "Who's against? Who abstains?" there was absolutely no way you could raise your hand, no way. So how could even a convicted man twist his tongue around the words "I am not a Soviet person"?

"In the OSO decree it stated that I was anti-Soviet," I said evasively.

"The OSO!" And he waved it away without the slightest respect. "But you yourself, what do you feel? Are you still a Soviet person? Or have you changed, and become embittered?"

That melody continued to play softly and so purely, and our syrupy, sticky, and inconsequential conversation didn't stick to it. Lord, how pure and how beautiful human life can be, but because of the egotism of those who have power we are never able to attain it. Was it Moniuszko? No, it wasn't Moniuszko. Or

Dvořák? No, it wasn't Dvořák? Go away and let me be, dog, and let me listen.

"Why should I be embittered?" I acted astonished. (Why indeed? For ten letters or so—eight years, and that was not even a full year for each letter. "To be embittered" was quite out of the question—it would already smell of a new term.)

"And so that means you are Soviet?" the security chief pressed at me, sternly but encouragingly.

The important thing was not to answer sharply. Not to disclose what I had become by then. Say now you are anti-Soviet, and a new camp case would be set in motion, and they would solder a new term onto you, very easily.

"In your own heart, inside—how do you think of yourself?"

It was so fearsome—winter and blizzards, going to the Arctic. And here I had everything well arranged. I had a dry place to sleep, and it was warm, and there were even bedclothes. In Moscow my wife came to visit me and brought parcels. . . . Where would I be sent? And why should I go if I could stay behind? . . . What was there shameful in saying, "Soviet"? The system was socialist.

"I, uh, for myself . . . yes, well . . . Soviet . . ."

"Aha, so you are Soviet! Now that's something else again." The security chief was gladdened. "So now you and I can talk as two Soviet people. That means you and I share the same ideology —we have common goals. [Only our lodgings were different.] And you and I must act in unity. You *help* us and we will help you."

I felt I had already slipped downward. . . . And there was still that music. . . . And he kept tossing and tossing his neat little nooses: I had to help him keep in touch with what was going on. I might choose to overhear certain conversations. I was to report on them. . . .

Well, that was something I would never do. Coldbloodedly inside myself I knew that quite well! Whether I was Soviet or not was immaterial: Don't sit around waiting for me to report political conversations to you! However—caution, caution! Somehow I had to cover my tracks delicately.

"That's something I . . . wouldn't be able to do," I replied to him with something sounding like regret.

"Why not?" My ideological colleague grew more severe.

"Well, because . . . it's not in my character. . . . [How can I put this to you politely, you bastard?] Because . . . I don't listen. . . . I don't remember. . . ."

He noted there was something between me and the music—and clicked off the radio. Silence. The warm, bright-colored eye of the good world was extinguished. In the office—just the hoot owl and myself. It was in deadly earnest now.

If only they had known the rules of chess: If moves are repeated three times in a row, a draw is declared. But no! They were lazy in everything else but not in this; a hundred times he monotonously checked me from one and the same square of the chessboard, and a hundred times I hid behind the same pawn and then sallied out from behind it again. He had no taste at all . . . but he had all the time in the world. And I had put myself in eternal check by declaring myself a Soviet person. Of course, there was some slight variation each of the hundred times: a different word, a different intonation.

An hour passed and another. In our cell they were already asleep, but there was no need for him to hurry. This was his work. How could I get shut of him? What sticky people they are! He had already hinted at a prisoner transport and at general work, and he had already expressed his suspicion that I was an inveterate enemy, and had gone back again to the hope that I was an inveterate friend.

Yield I couldn't. Neither did I want to go on a prisoner transport in winter. And with heavy heart I wondered how it all would end.

All of a sudden he switched the conversation to the thieves. He had heard from the jailer Senin that I had spoken out sharply* against the thieves, that I had had a run-in with them. I came to life—this was a new move. Yes, I did hate them. (But I know that *you* love them.)

And in order to go right at my tenderest point, he drew the following picture. I have a wife in Moscow. Without a husband she has to walk the streets by herself, sometimes even at night. People on the street often have their clothes taken off them. By those very same thieves who escape from camp. (No, by those you amnesty!) So would I really refuse to report to the security chief if I should happen to learn of preparations for escape by the thieves?

Well, that was different, the thieves were enemies, pitiless enemies, and against them maybe any methods were good. . . . Anyway, good or not, the main thing was that it was a good out for me. At least it seemed so.

"I could. That I could do."

You said it! You said it! And the devil only needs one little word! And instantly a clean sheet of paper fluttered onto the table in front of me:

PLEDGE

I, the undersigned, pledge to report to the camp security officer any escapes planned by prisoners. . . .

"But we were talking only about the thieves!"

"And who escapes except the thieves? And how am I going to write the word 'thieves' in an official document? That's slang. It makes sense just as it is."

"But the entire meaning is changed!"

"No, now I see that you are *not one of us*, and that it is necessary to talk with you *in an entirely different way—and not here.*"

Oh, what fearsome words! "Not here." When there is a blizzard outside the window, when you are a trusty and live in a friendly chamber of monstrosities. Where is that "not here"? In Lefortovo? And what does it mean, "in an entirely different way"? Anyway, in the last analysis, there hadn't been a single escape during my time in this camp, it was about as likely as a meteorite falling. And if there were going to be escapes, what fool would talk about them ahead of time? And that meant I would never know. And that meant there would be nothing for me to report. In the last analysis, this wasn't a bad way out of it. . . . But . . .

"Couldn't we really get along without that paper?"

"That's the system."

I sighed. I reassured myself with unspoken qualifications and put my signature down, selling my soul. Selling my soul to save my body. All done? Can I go?

Oh, not at all. There was also one "on nondisclosure." But farther up the same piece of paper.

"You must choose a pseudonym for yourself."

A pseudonym? Aha, you mean a *conspiratorial nickname!* Yes, yes, yes, of course. All informers have to have a conspiratorial nickname! Good Lord, how swiftly I had fallen. He had outplayed me after all. The chessmen had moved, and it was checkmate.

And all my imagination fled and my mind went blank. I can always find names for dozens of heroes. Now I couldn't think up even one little nickname. Mercifully he suggested to me: "Well, what about Vetrov?"

And finally I wrote, at the end of the "pledge": "*Vetrov.*" Those six letters are branded in shameful grooves on my memory.

After all, I had wanted to die among human beings! I had been prepared to die among human beings! How did it turn out that I had remained to live among curs?

And the commissioner tucked my pledge away in the safe—this was his output for the night shift. And he courteously explained to me that I must not come to his office, that this would cause suspicion. The jailer Senin was a trustworthy person and all my reports (*denunciations!*) could be transmitted secretly through Senin.

That's how birds are snared. Beginning with the tiny little claw.

That particular year I probably wouldn't have been able to stop myself at that edge. After all, if you can't hold on to the mane, you'll not be able to hold on by the tail either. Once you start sliding down, you'll slide down further.

But something helped me to hold back. Whenever I met Senin he used to urge me on: "Well, well?" I used to spread my hands: I had heard nothing. I was regarded with hostility by the thieves and was unable to get close to them. And then, as if out of spite, although there had been no escapes at all, all of a sudden a lousy thief escaped from our camp. All right then, report on something else! On the brigade! On the room! Senin insisted. I kept insisting that I hadn't promised to report on anything else. (By now it was already getting on toward spring.) Nonetheless I had gained a little by giving too narrow a pledge.

And at this point I was jerked out of the camp and into a sharashka on special orders from the Ministry. And that's how I

got by. Never again did I have to sign as "Vetrov." But even today I shudder when I encounter that name.

Oh, how difficult it is, how difficult it is, to become a human being! Even if you have survived the front and bombing and been blown up by land mines, that's still only the very beginning of heroism. That is still not the whole thing. . . .

Many years passed. I had been in sharashkas and Special Camps. I bore myself independently, ever more impudently, and never again did the Security Section spoil me with its good offices, and I grew used to living with the gay conviction that on my case file they had stamped: "Do not recruit!"

I was sent into exile. I lived there for nearly three years. The dispersal of the exiles had already begun too, and several of the exiled nationalities had already been liberated. By this time those of us who remained used to joke when we went to report in at the commandant's headquarters. The Twentieth Congress* had also passed. And everything seemed gone once and for all. I made jolly plans for my return to European Russia as soon as I was released. And suddenly when I was leaving the school courtyard one day, a well-dressed Kazakh (in civilian clothes) greeted me by name and patronymic, and hurried over to shake my hand.

"Let's go and talk." He nodded amiably in the direction of the commandant's headquarters.

"I have to have my lunch." I waved him away.

"And will you be free later this evening?"

"I won't be free this evening either." (In my free evenings I was writing a novel.)

"Well, when will you be free tomorrow?"

He had caught me. And I had to fix an appointment for the next day. I thought he would have something to say about my case being reconsidered. (Just before this I had made a mistake. I had written a petition to the higher-ups, just like the orthodox Communists, which meant I had got myself into the situation of a petitioner. That was something State Security couldn't let by!) But the province Security officer had triumphantly taken over the office of the district MVD chief, had locked the door, and was clearly preparing for a conversation that was to last many hours, and that was rendered all the more complicated by the fact that he

didn't speak Russian very well. Despite this, by the end of the first hour I realized that he was interested not in reconsideration of my case but in recruiting me as an informer. (Evidently, with the release of a section of their exiles, the ranks of the informers had grown sparse.)

I found all this both ridiculous and vexing: vexing because I regarded each half-hour as very precious, and ridiculous because in March, 1956, this kind of conversation grated on me with its bad timing like the clumsy scraping of a knife across a plate. Very gently I tried to explain this untimeliness to him, but he would have none of it. Like a serious bulldog, he tried not to let up on his grip. Every sort of relaxation in the Soviet Union always reaches the provinces after a delay of three, five, or ten years. And it is only tightening up which is instantaneous. He hadn't the slightest idea of what 1956 was to be like! Then I reminded him that the MGB had been abolished, but he eagerly and happily demonstrated to me that the KGB was exactly the same thing, with the same personnel, and the same tasks.

But by that year I had already developed some sort of cavalier carelessness toward their glorious institution. I felt that it would be quite in the spirit of the epoch to send him exactly where he and his colleagues deserved. I feared no direct consequences for myself—they couldn't happen during that glorious year. And it would have been great fun simply to leave, slamming the door behind me.

But I stopped to think first. What about my manuscripts? For whole days at a time they lay there in my tiny hut, protected only by a weak little lock, yes, and concealed on the inside with an additional small ruse. At night I would get them out and write away. If I were to enrage the KGB, they would look for a chance of revenge, something compromising, and they might just find my manuscripts?

No, I simply had to bring this to an end peaceably.

Oh, my country! Oh, my accursed country, where in its very freest months the human being most inwardly free could not permit himself to antagonize the gendarmes! . . . He could not fling in their faces everything he thought.

"I am gravely ill, that's the problem. My illness doesn't allow me to look around and snoop. I have enough troubles! Let's leave it at that."

Of course, this was a pitiful way of getting out of it. Because I was recognizing their actual right to recruit. And what I should have done was to ridicule and deny that right. It was a refusal . . . on my knees.

And he still didn't accept it, the smart aleck! For half an hour more he kept trying to prove to me that even a gravely ill person also ought to collaborate! But when he saw that I was totally immovable, he took another tack:

"Do you have an extra certificate?"

"What kind?"

"Certifying that you are so ill."

"Yes, I have a certificate."

"Then bring it to me."

Yes, he had to have his "output," too, for his own workday! Justification that I had been correctly selected as a candidate, but that they had not known that this person was gravely ill. The certificate was required not merely for him to read, but to be stapled into the case file, and thereby to end the whole attempt.

I gave him the document, and with that we were quits.

Those were the freest months in our country in a whole half-century!

And what about the person who had no medical excuse?

■

The skill of the security officer consisted in immediately picking the right master key. In one of the Siberian camps, a native of one of the Baltic countries, U., who knew Russian well (which was why the choice fell on him), was summoned "to the chief." And there in the chief's office sat an unfamiliar captain with an aquiline nose and the hypnotic gaze of a cobra. "Shut the door tight!" he warned very gravely, as if enemies were about to burst in, without lowering his burning eyes, which stared at U. from beneath shaggy brows—and inside U. everything wilted, something burned and suffocated him. Before summoning U., of course, the captain had gathered all the information available about him, and without even having seen him had determined that keys 1, 2, 3, and 4 would all be of no avail, that here only the last and strongest key could be used, but he kept staring for several minutes into U.'s unclouded, defenseless eyes, checking

him out with his own eyes and at the same time depriving him of his will power, and already invisibly raising above him that which would immediately descend upon him.

The security chief took time for only the briefest introduction, speaking not in the tone of an abstract political catechism, but tensely, as if something were about to explode today or tomorrow right there in their own camp. "Do you know the world is divided into two camps, and one will be defeated, and we know very well which it will be? Do you know which? So that's how it is: if you want to survive, you must break away from the doomed capitalist shore and swim across to the new shore. Are you familiar with Latsis' *To the New Shore?*"* And he added a few more such phrases, and did not for a moment lower his hot threatening gaze, and having finally confirmed in his own mind the number of the key, he then asked with alarmed seriousness: "And *what about your family?*" And one by one, without ceremony, he reeled off all their names! And he knew the ages of the children too! That meant he had already familiarized himself with the family—that was very serious! "You understand, of course," he pronounced hypnotically, "that you and your family are a single whole. If you make a mistake and perish, your family will immediately perish too. We do not permit *the families of traitors* [his voice grew more meaningful] to go on living in the healthy Soviet environment. So make your choice between the two worlds! Between life and death! I am offering you an opportunity to pledge to assist the Security Section! In case you refuse, your entire family will be immediately imprisoned in camp! In our hands we have full power [how right he was!] and we are not accustomed to backtrack on our decisions. [Once again he was right!] Since we have chosen you, you *will* work with us!"

All this was loosed suddenly on U.'s head. He was not prepared for it. He would never have thought of it. He had considered that only scoundrels became informers. But that they might approach him? A blow—direct, without waste motion, without the cushion of time—and the captain was waiting for his answer, and was about to explode right then, and then everything would explode! And U. took thought: What is there that is really impossible for them? When have they ever spared anyone's family? They didn't hesitate to liquidate the "kulak" families right down to tiny children, and they even wrote about it proudly in the news-

papers. U. had also seen the work of the Organs in 1940 and 1941 in the Baltic States, and had gone to the prison yards to look at the pile of executed prisoners during the Soviet retreat. And in 1944 he had heard the Baltic broadcasts from Leningrad. Like the captain's gaze at this moment, they had been full of threats and had breathed revenge. They promised reprisals against *all*, against every last person who had aided the enemy.[3]

And so what was there to compel them to show mercy now? To ask for it was useless. It was necessary to choose. (But here is what U., himself a victim of the myth of the Organs, did not yet realize: That machine possessed no such magnificent coordination and interlinked responsiveness as would ensure that when he refused today to become an informer in a Siberian camp his family would be hauled off to Siberia in a week's time. And there was one more thing he didn't realize either. No matter how poor his opinion of the Organs, they were even worse than he thought: the hour would soon strike when all these families, all these hundreds of thousands of families, would troop off into common exile, where they would perish, without any reference to how the fathers were behaving in camp.)

Fear for himself would not have shaken him. But U. pictured his wife and daughter in camp conditions—in these same barracks where lechery wasn't even curtained off, where there was no defense whatever for any woman under sixty. And . . . he shuddered. The correct key had been picked. None other would have opened the door, but this one did.

But he still dragged things out a bit: "I have to think it over." "All right, think it over for three days, but don't talk it over with even a single person. *You will be shot for disclosure!*" (And U. goes to get advice from a fellow national—the very same, in fact, against whom he is being told to write his first denunciation, and, in fact, they edit it together. For this friend admits it is impossible to risk his family.)

On his second visit to the captain, U. signs the devil's receipt, and receives his assignment and his contact: he is not to go to

3. But every teacher, every factory worker, every streetcar conductor, everyone who had had to earn his bread with his work, had one and all aided the enemy. The only persons who didn't aid the enemy were the speculator at the market and the partisan in the forest! The extreme tone of these thoughtless Leningrad broadcasts pushed several hundred thousands of persons into flight into Scandinavia in 1944.

the office any more; he is to conduct all his business through the unconvoyed trusty Frol Ryabinin.

This is an important constituent of the work of the camp security chief: These "residents"* are scattered throughout the camp. Frol Ryabinin is the most vociferous of all "among the people," a prankster. Frol Ryabinin is a popular personality. Frol Ryabinin has some sort of under-the-counter work or other, and a separate cabin of his own, and always has money. With the security chief's help he has got into the depths and currents of camp life, and he hovers in them, comfortably at home. Such "residents" as he are the cables on which the whole network hangs.

Frol Ryabinin instructs U. that he must transmit his reports in a dark nook. ("In *our* work the main thing is conspiracy.") He summons him to his private quarters: "The captain is dissatisfied with your report. You have to write so that there's *material* against a person. I'm going to teach you how."

And this stinking snoot teaches the wan, depressed intellectual U. how to write filth against people! But U.'s downcast look leads Ryabinin to his own conclusion: it is necessary to liven this ninny up, to heat him up a little! And he says to him in a friendly way: "Listen, your life is a hard one. You sometimes want to buy something to add to your bread ration. The captain wants to help you. Here, take this!" And he takes a fifty-ruble bill from his billfold. (And this is the captain's! And that is how free of auditors *they* are, and maybe they are the only ones in the whole country!) And he shoves it at U.

And suddenly, at the sight of this pale-green toad which has been pushed into his hands, all the spells cast by the cobra captain, all the hypnosis, all the constraint, even all the fear for his family—all that has taken place, its entire meaning, is objectified in this loathsome bill with its greenish phlegm, these commonplace Judas silver pieces. And without even stopping to think what will happen to his family, with the natural gesture of warding off filth, U. pushes away the fifty-ruble bill, and the uncomprehending Ryabinin shoves it at him again, and U. throws it on the floor and gets up, already relieved, already *free* both of the moral teachings of Ryabinin and of his signature given to the captain, free of those paper conditions in the face of the great duty of a human being! He leaves without asking permission! He

walks through the camp compound on legs light as air: "I'm free! I'm free!"

Well, not entirely so. A stupid security chief would have kept on hauling him in. But the cobra captain understood that the stupid Ryabinin had spoiled the threading, had used the wrong key. And the pincers no longer sought out U. in that camp, and Ryabinin would pass him without greeting. U. calmed down and was glad. And at this point they began to send the 58's off to the Special Camps, and he was sent to Steplag. And he thought that this prisoner transport would break the chain all the more.

But not at all! A notation evidently remained in his file. At his new place U. was summoned to a colonel: "They tell me you agreed to work with us but that you *do not deserve our trust.* Perhaps they didn't explain it to you clearly."

However, this colonel inspired no fear in U. And, in addition, U.'s family, like the families of many of the inhabitants of the Baltic States, had been resettled in Siberia by this time. There was no doubt about it: he had to get them off his back. But what pretext could he use?

The colonel turned him over to a lieutenant for the latter to work him over. And this lieutenant jumped up and down and threatened and promised while U. kept trying to find a way of forcefully and decisively turning them down.

Though he was an enlightened and irreligious person, U. discovered that the only defense against them was to hide behind Christ. This was not very honest, but it was a sure thing. He lied: "I must tell you frankly that I had a Christian upbringing, and therefore it is quite impossible for me to work with you!"

And that ended it! And all the lieutenant's chatter, which had by then lasted many hours, simply stopped! The lieutenant understood he had drawn a bad number. "We need you like a dog needs five legs," he exclaimed petulantly. "Give me a written refusal." (Once again "written"!) "And write just that, explaining about your damned god!"

Apparently they have to close the case of every informer with a separate piece of paper, just as they open it with one. The reference to Christ satisfied the lieutenant completely: none of the security officers would accuse him subsequently of failing to use every effort he could.

And does the impartial reader not find that they flee from Christ like devils from the sign of the cross, from the bells calling to matins?

And that is why our Soviet regime can never come to terms with Christianity! And the French Communists' promises to the contrary mean nothing.

Chapter 13

■

Hand Over Your Second Skin Too!

Can you behead a man whose head has already been cut off? You can. Can you skin the hide off a man when he has already been skinned? You can!

This was all invented in our camps. This was all devised in the Archipelago! So let it not be said that the *brigade* was our only Soviet contribution to world penal science. Is not *the second camp term* a contribution too? The waves which surge into the Archipelago from outside do not die down there and do not subside freely, but are pumped through the pipes of the second interrogation.

Oh, blessed are those pitiless tyrannies, those despotisms, those savage countries, where a person once arrested cannot be arrested a second time! Where once in prison he cannot be reimprisoned. Where a person who has been tried cannot be tried again! Where a sentenced person cannot be sentenced again!

But in our country everything is permissible. When a man is flat on his back, irrevocably doomed and in the depths of despair, how convenient it is to poleax him again! The ethics of our prison chiefs are: "Beat the man who's down." And the ethics of our Security officers are: "Use corpses as steppingstones!"

We may take it that camp interrogations and camp court were born on Solovki, although what they did there was simply to push them into the bell-tower basement and finish them off. During the period of the Five-Year Plans and of the metastases,

they began to employ the second camp term instead of the bullet.

For how otherwise, without second (or third or fourth) terms, could they secrete in the bosom of the Archipelago, and destroy, all those marked down for destruction?

The generation of new prison terms, like the growing of a snake's rings, is a form of Archipelago life. As long as our camps thrived and our exile lasted, this black threat hovered over the heads of the convicted: to be given a new term before they had finished the first one. Second camp terms were handed out every year, but most intensively in 1937 and 1938 and during the war years. (In 1948–1949 the burden of second terms was transferred outside: they *overlooked*, they missed, prisoners who should have been resentenced in camp—and then had to haul them back into camp from outside. These were even called *repeaters*, whereas those resentenced inside didn't get a special name.)

And it was a mercy—an automated mercy—when, in 1938, second camp terms were given out without any second arrest, without a camp interrogation, without a camp court, when the prisoners were simply called up in brigades to the Records and Classification Section and told to sign for their second terms. (For refusing to sign—you were simply put in punishment block, as for smoking where it wasn't allowed.) And they also had it all explained to them in a very human way: "We aren't telling you that you are guilty of anything, but just sign that you have been informed." In the Kolyma that's how they gave out tenners, but in Vorkuta it was even less severe: eight years plus five years by the OSO. And it was useless to try to get out of it as if, in the dark infinity of the Archipelago, eight was in any way distinct from eighteen, or a tenner at the start from a tenner at the end of a sentence. The only important thing was that they did not claw and tear your body today.

Now we can understand: The epidemic of camp sentences in 1938 was the result of a directive from above. It was there at the top that they suddenly came to their senses and realized that they had been handing out too little, that they had to pile it on (and shoot some too)—and thus frighten the rest.

But the epidemic of camp cases during the war was stimulated by a happy spark from *below* too, by the features of popular initiative. In all likelihood there was an order from above that during the war the most colorful and notable individuals in each

35. Captain Lebedev, a "godfather"

camp, who might become centers of rebellion, had to be suppressed and isolated. The bloody local boys immediately sensed the riches in this vein—their own *deliverance from the front.* This was evidently guessed in more than one camp and rapidly taken up as useful, ingenious, and a salvation. The camp Chekists also helped fill up the machine-gun embrasures—but with other people's bodies.

Let the historian picture to himself the pulse of those years: The front was moving east, the Germans were around Leningrad, outside Moscow, in Voronezh, on the Volga, and in the foothills of the Caucasus. In the rear there were ever fewer men. Every healthy male figure aroused reproachful glances. Everything for the front! There was no price too big for the government to pay to stop Hitler. And only the camp officers (and their confreres in State Security) were well fed, white, soft-skinned, idle—all in their places in the rear. (In Illustration No. 35—this camp "godfather," for example. How badly he needed to stay alive.) And the farther into Siberia and the North they were, the quieter things were. But we must soberly understand: theirs was a shaky prosperity. Due to end at the first outcry: Bring out those rosy-cheeked, smart camp fellows! No battle experience? So they had ideology. And they would be lucky to end up in the police, or in the behind-the-lines "obstacle" detachments,* but it could happen otherwise; otherwise it was into officer battalions and be thrown into the Battle of Stalingrad! In the summer of 1942 they picked up whole officer-training schools and hurled them into the front, uncertified, their courses unfinished. All the young and healthy convoy guards had already been scraped up for the front. And the camps hadn't fallen apart. It was all right. And they wouldn't fall apart if the security officers were called up either! (There were already rumors.)

Draft deferment—that was life. Draft deferment—that was happiness. How could you keep your draft deferment? Easy—you simply had to prove your *importance!* You had to prove that if it were not for Chekist vigilance the camps would blow apart, that they were a caldron of seething tar! And then our whole glorious front would collapse! It was right here in the camps in the tundra and the taiga that the white-chested security chiefs were holding back the Fifth Column, holding back Hitler! This was their contribution to victory! Not sparing themselves, they conducted interrogation after interrogation, exposing plot after plot.

Until now only the unhappy, worn-out camp inmates, tearing the bread from each other's mouths, had been fighting for their lives! But now the omnipotent Chekist security officers shamelessly entered the fray. "You croak today, me tomorrow." Better you should perish and put off my death, you dirty animal.

And so they cooked up a "rebel group" in Ust-Vym: eighteen persons! They wanted, of course, to disarm the Militarized Guard, get its weapons away from it (half a dozen old rifles)! What then? It is hard to picture the scale of the plan: They wanted to raise the entire North! To march on Vorkuta! On Moscow! To join up with Mannerheim! And telegrams and reports flew to the top. A big plot had been neutralized. There was unrest in the camps! The security staff had to be strengthened.

And what was this? Plots were discovered in every camp! More plots! Still more! Ever larger in scale! And ever broader! Oh, those perfidious last-leggers! They were just feigning that they could be blown over by the wind—their paper-thin, pellagra-stricken hands were secretly reaching for the machine guns! Oh, thank you, Security Section! Oh, savior of the Motherland—the Third Section!

And a whole gang sat there in that Third Section in the Dzhida camps of Buryat-Mongolia: Chief of the Security Operations Section Sokolov, Interrogator Mironenko; Security Officers Kalashnikov, Sosikov, Osintsev: We've fallen behind! Everyone else has plots, and we have fallen behind! We do have a major plot, of course, but what kind? Well, of course, "the Militarized Guard is to be disarmed"; yes, of course, "they are going abroad"—after all, the border was close and Hitler was far away. With whom should they begin?

And just as a well-fed pack of hounds tears a sick, skinny, and mangy rabbit to bits, so did this sky-blue pack hurl itself on the unfortunate Babich, former Arctic explorer, former hero, now a last-legger covered with ulcers. It was he who at the outset of the war had nearly turned over the icebreaker *Sadko* to the Germans—so all the threads of the plot were obviously in his hands. It was his scurvy-racked dying body that was to save their well-nourished ones.

"Even if you are a bad Soviet citizen, we will still make you do as we wish, you will kiss our boots!" "You don't remember? We will remind you!" "You can't write? *We'll help you!*" "You want time to think? Into the punishment cell on ten and a half ounces!"

And here is what another security man told him: "I'm very sorry. Of course, you will come to understand later on that it would have been sensible to do as we demand. But it will be too

late, when we can break you *like a pencil* between our fingers." (Where do they get this imagery? Do they think it up themselves or is there a selection of such phrases in Chekist textbooks composed by some unknown poet?)

And here is the interrogation by Mironenko. Hardly had they brought Babich in than he was hit by the smell of tasty food. And Mironenko made him sit quite close to the steaming meat borscht and cutlets. And as though unaware of that borscht and those cutlets or even that Babich could see them, he gently cited dozens of arguments to relieve his conscience and justify not only the possibility but also the necessity of giving false testimony. He reminded Babich amiably:

"When you were arrested the first time, in freedom, and tried to prove your innocence, you did not after all succeed, did you? No, you didn't succeed! Because your fate had already been decided before your arrest. That's how it is now. That's how it is now. Well, well, eat the lunch. Go ahead: eat it before it gets cold. . . . If you are not stupid, we will get along very well. You will always be well fed and provided for. . . . Otherwise . . ."

And Babich shuddered! Hunger for life had turned out to be stronger than the thirst for truth. And he began to write down everything dictated to him. And he slandered twenty-four people, of whom he knew only four! And for the entire period of the interrogation he was fed, but never given enough, so that at the first sign of resistance they could lean on his hunger again.

Reading the record of his life written before his death sends shivers down your spine: from what heights and into what depths can a brave man fall! Can all of us. . . .

And so it was that twenty-four people who knew nothing about anything were taken to be shot or to get new terms. And before the trial Babich was sent off to a state farm as a sewage-disposal worker, and then gave testimony at the trial, and then was given a new *tenner*, with his previous term erased, but he died in camp before completing his second term.

What about the gang from the Dzhida Third Section? Well, will someone investigate that gang!? Anyone! Our contemporaries! Our descendants! . . .

And—you? You thought that in camp at least you could unburden your soul? That here you could at least complain aloud: "My sentence is too long! They fed me badly! I have too much

work!" Or you thought that here you could at least *repeat* what you got your term for? But if you say any of this aloud—you are done for! You are doomed to get a new "tenner." (True, once a new camp tenner begins, at least the first is erased, so that as it works out you serve not twenty, but some thirteen or fifteen or the like. . . . Which will be more than you can survive.)

But you are sure you have been silent as a fish? And then you are grabbed anyway? Quite right! They couldn't help grabbing you no matter how you behaved. After all, they don't grab *for something* but *because*. It's the same principle according to which they clip the wool off *freedom* too. When the Third Section gang goes hunting, it picks a list of the most noticeable people in the camp. And that is the list they then dictate to Babich. . . .

In camp, after all, it is even more difficult to hide, everything is out in the open. And there is only one salvation for a person: to be a zero! A total zero. A zero from the very beginning.

To stick you with a charge presents no problem. When the "plots" came to an end after 1943 (the Germans began to retreat), a multitude of cases of "propaganda" appeared. (Those "godfathers" still didn't want to go to the front!) In the Burepolom Camp, for example, the following selection was available:

- Hostile activity against the policy of the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet government (and what it was you can guess for yourself!)
- Expression of defeatist fabrications
- Expression of slanderous opinions about the material situation of the workers of the Soviet Union (Telling the truth was slander.)
- Expression of a desire (!) for the restoration of the capitalist system
- Expression of a grudge against the Soviet government (This was particularly impudent! Who are you, you bastard, to nurse grudges! So you got a "tenner" and you should have kept your mouth shut!)

A seventy-year-old former Tsarist diplomat was charged with making the following propaganda:

- That the working class in the U.S.S.R. lives badly
- That Gorky was a bad writer (!!)

To say that they had gone too far in bringing these charges against him is out of the question. They always handed out sentences for Gorky; that's how he had set himself up. Skvortsov, for example, in Lokchimlag (near Ust-Vym), harvested fifteen years, and among the charges against him was the following:

• He had unfavorably contrasted the proletarian poet Mayakovsky with *a certain* bourgeois poet.

That's what it said in the formal charges against him, and it was enough to get him convicted. And from the minutes of the interrogation we can establish who that *certain* bourgeois poet was. It was Pushkin! To get a sentence for Pushkin—that, in truth, was a rarity!

After that, therefore, Martinson, who really did say in the tin shop that "the U.S.S.R. was one big *camp*," ought to have sung praise to God that he got off with a "tenner."

As ought those refusing to work who got a "tenner" instead of execution.[1]

But it was not the number of years, not the empty and fantastic length of years, that made these second terms so awful—but *how* you got them. How you had to crawl through that iron pipe in the ice and snow to get them.

It would seem that arrest would be a nothing for a camp inmate. For a person who had once been arrested from his warm domestic bed—what did it matter to be arrested again from an uncomfortable barracks with bare bunks? But it certainly did! In the barracks the stove was warm and a full bread ration was

1. It was such a pleasure to hand out second terms, and it lent such meaning to the lives of the Security Operations Sections, that when the war was at an end, and it was no longer possible to believe either in plots or even in defeatist moods, they began to paste on terms under nonpolitical articles. In 1947, in the agricultural camp Dolinka, there were show trials in the compound every Sunday. They tried potato diggers for baking some potatoes in bonfires; they tried people for eating raw carrots and turnips in the fields. (What would some nobleman's serfs have said if tried for something like that?!) And for all this they handed out terms of five and eight years under the recently issued great "Decree of Four-sixths." One former "kulak" was already coming to the end of his "tenner." He was in charge of the camp bull calf, and he couldn't any longer stand to see it starve. He fed this camp bull calf—not himself!—with beets—and got eight years for it. Of course, a "socially friendly" zek would not have undertaken to feed the bull calf! And that is how in our country, over decades, natural selection operated, deciding who would live and who would die.

given. But here came the jailer and jerked you by the foot at night. "Gather up your things!" Oh, how you didn't want to go! People, people, I love you. . . .

The camp interrogation prison. What kind of a prison will it be and how can it possibly advance your confession if it isn't worse than your own camp? All these prisons are invariably cold. If they aren't cold enough, then they keep you in the cells in just your underwear. The famous Vorkuta *Number Thirty* (a term borrowed by the zeks from the Chekists, who called it that because of its telephone number, 30), a board barracks beyond the Arctic Circle, was heated with coal dust when it was 40 degrees below zero outside, one washtubful a day, and not because they lacked coal in Vorkuta, of course. And they tormented them with more than that—they didn't issue them matches. And for kindling there was one little chip the size of a pencil. (Incidentally, escapees who had been caught were kept in this Number Thirty *stark naked*. After two weeks anyone who had survived was given summer clothes but no padded jacket. And there were no mattresses and no blankets. Reader! Try it, just try to sleep like that for one night! In the barracks it was approximately 40 above.)

And that was how the prisoners were kept throughout the several months of interrogation! Even before that, of course, they had been worn down by many years of hunger and by slave labor. And now, it was much easier to finish them off. What did they feed them? As the Third Section instructed: in some places eleven and a quarter ounces a day, and in some places ten and a half ounces, and in Number Thirty seven ounces of bread, sticky as clay, a piece little bigger than a matchbox, and once a day a thin gruel.

But you still wouldn't get warmed up right away even if you signed everything, if you admitted everything, if you surrendered, and if you agreed to spend another ten years in this dearly beloved Archipelago. Until your trial they moved you from Number Thirty to the Vorkuta "interrogation tent"—no less famous. This was a plain ordinary tent, yes, and full of holes to boot. It had no floor. The floor was the Arctic earth. Inside it was seven by twelve yards, and in the center was an iron barrel instead of a stove. There were single-decker lattice bunks on one level and those next to the stove were always occupied by the thieves.

The political plebeians . . . had to sleep around the outside or on the ground. You would lie there and see the stars above you. And you would pray: "Oh, the sooner they try me the better! The sooner they sentence me the better!" You awaited that trial as a deliverance. (People will say: No person can live like that beyond the Arctic Circle, unless he is fed chocolate and dressed in furs. But in our country . . . he can! Our Soviet man, our Archipelago native . . . can! Arnold Rappoport spent many *months* like that—the Provincial Assizes kept delaying its journey from Naryan-Mar.)

Or here, for your delectation, is one more interrogation prison—the penalty camp of Orotukan in the Kolyma, 315 miles from Magadan. It was the winter of 1937–1938. A wood and canvas settlement, in other words, tents with holes in them but overlaid with rough boards. The newly arrived prisoner transport, a bunch of new interrogation fodder, saw even before being led in through the door: every tent in the settlement *was surrounded with piles of frozen corpses* on three out of four sides, except where the door was. (And this was not to terrify. There was simply no way out of it: people died, and snow was six feet deep, and beneath it there was only permafrost.) And then came the torment of waiting. You had to wait in the tents until you were transferred to the log prison for interrogation. But they had taken on too much and too many. They had herded in too many rabbits from the whole of the Kolyma, and the interrogators couldn't cope with them, and the majority of those brought here were simply destined to die without even getting to their first interrogation session. The tents were congested, there was no room to stretch out. You lay there on the bunks and on the floor, and you lay there for many weeks at a time. ("Do you really call that congestion?" responds the Serpantinka. "Here they wait to be shot—true, only for several days at a time—but *standing* the whole time in a shed, so that when they *give them a drink*—that is, throw pieces of ice over their heads from the doorway—it is so crowded that it is impossible to stretch out a hand to catch the pieces, and instead you have to try to catch them with your mouth.") There were no baths, nor any outdoor exercise periods in the fresh air. Bodies itched. Everyone scratched frantically, and everyone kept on *searching* for lice in padded cotton britches, padded jackets, shirts, underwear shorts, but they searched with-

out undressing because of the cold. The big, white, bloated lice reminded you of plump suckling piglets. And when you crushed them, they splashed your face, and your nails were covered with ichor.

Before lunch the duty jailer would shout through the door: "Are there any stiffs?" "Yes." "Whoever wants to earn a bread ration—drag them out!" They were dragged out and placed on top of the pile of corpses. And *no one bothered to ask the names of the dead!* The bread rations were issued on the basis of the total count. And the ration was ten and a half ounces. And one bowl of gruel a day. And they would also issue humpbacked salmon rejected by the sanitation inspector. It was very salty. You were very thirsty after it, but there was never any hot water, never. Just barrels of icy water. You had to drink many cups to quench your thirst. G.S.M. used to try to persuade his friends: "Turn down the humpbacked salmon—that's your only salvation! You spend all the calories you get from your bread on warming that icy water inside you!" But people simply couldn't turn down a piece of free fish—so they kept on eating it and then drinking. And they trembled from inner cold. M. himself didn't eat it, so it's he who now tells us about Orotukan.

It was so congested in the barracks—yet it kept steadily thinning out. After a certain number of weeks the survivors of the barracks were driven outside for a roll call. In the unaccustomed daylight they saw one another: pale, their faces overgrown with stubble, beaded with nits, hard, dark blue lips, sunken eyes. They called the roll by file cards. The answers were barely audible. The cards to which there was no response were put aside. And that is how they established who was left there in the piles of corpses—avoiding interrogation.

All who survived Orotukan say they would have preferred the gas chamber.

The interrogation? It proceeded according to the plans of the interrogator. And those in whose cases it didn't are not about to tell us. As the security chief Komarov said: "All I need is your right hand—to sign the testimony." Well, yes, there were tortures, of course, homemade and primitive. They would crush a hand in the door, and it was all in that vein. (Try it, reader.)

The court? Some sort of *camp collegium*—this was a per-

manent camp court subordinate to the Provincial Court, like the people's court in the district. Legality was triumphant! And there would be witnesses, bought by the Third Section for a bowl of gruel.

In Burepolom the brigadiers often testified against their brigade members. The interrogator—a Chuvash named Krutikov—forced them to. "Otherwise I will remove you from your position as brigadier and send you to Pechora!" And so a brigadier named Nikolai Ronzhin from Gorky stepped forward to testify: "Yes, Bernshtein said that Singer sewing machines were good and that Podolsk sewing machines were bad." Well, that was enough! Enough at least for the assizes of the Gorky Provincial Court (Chairman Bukhonin, and two local Komsomol girls, Zhukova and Korkina). Ten years!

In Burepolom there was also a smith, Anton Vasilyevich Balyberdin (local, from Tonshayevo), who used to be a witness at all camp trials. Should you run into him, please shake his honest hand!

Well, and then finally . . . there was one more prisoner transport to another camp, to make sure you didn't take it into your head to get even with the witnesses against you. This was a short transport—four hours or so on an open flatcar on the narrow-gauge railroad.

And then it was into the hospital. And if you could still put one foot in front of the other, tomorrow, first thing in the morning, you'd be pushing a wheelbarrow.

All hail the Chekist vigilance which saved us from military defeat, and saved the security officers from the front!

■

Few were shot during the war (if we exclude the republics from which we retreated in haste), and for the most part new terms were passed instead: what the Chekists needed was not the annihilation of these people, merely the disclosure of their crimes. The convicted could then labor or they could die—this was a matter of economics.

In 1938, there was an extreme impatience to shoot on the part of the higher-ups! They shot as many as they could in all the camps, but they shot the most in the Kolyma (the "Garanin" executions) and in Vorkuta (the "Kashketin" executions).

The Kashketin executions were tied up with the skin-grating name of the Old Brickyard. That was what the station of the narrow-gauge railroad twelve miles south of Vorkuta was called.

After the "victory" of the Trotskyite hunger strike in March, 1937, and the deception perpetrated on its participants, the "Grigorovich Commission" was sent from Moscow for investigation of the strikers. South of Ukhta, not far from the railroad bridge across the Ropcha River in the taiga, a long stockade was set up, and a new isolator—Ukhtarka—was created. This is where the interrogation of the Trotskyites of the southern section of the trunk railroad line was conducted. And commission member Kashketin was sent to Vorkuta itself. Here he dragged the Trotskyites through the "interrogation tent" (they were flogged with whips!). And without even insisting that they admit their guilt, he drew up his "Kashketin lists."

In the winter of 1937–1938 they began assembling at the Old Brickyard the Trotskyites and also the "detsisty"—the "democratic centralists"—from various concentration points—from tents at the mouth of the Syr-Yaga, from Kochmes, from Sivaya Maska, from Ukhtarka (some of them without any interrogation whatever). Several of the most prominent were taken to Moscow in connection with trials there. By April, 1938, the rest of them at the Old Brickyard numbered 1,053 persons. In the tundra, off to the side of the narrow-gauge railroad, stood a long old shed. They began to settle the strikers in it, and then, as additional groups arrived, they also set up next to it two tattered old tents, which had nothing to reinforce them, for 250 persons each. We can guess what the conditions were from what we know about Orotukan. In the middle of the six-by-twenty-yard tent like that stood one gasoline drum in place of a stove, for which one pail of coal per day was allotted, and in addition the zeks would throw their lice in to add a little to the heat. A thick layer of hoarfrost covered the inside of the canvas wall. There were not enough places on the bunks and the zeks took turns lying down and walking. They were given ten and a half ounces of bread a day and one bowl of gruel. Sometimes, though not every day, they were given a piece of codfish. There was no water and they were given pieces of ice as part of the ration. It goes without saying, of course, that they were never able to wash themselves and that there was no bath. Patches of scurvy appeared on their bodies.

But what made this more oppressive than Orotukan was that

they sicked on the Trotskyites the camp storm troopers—thieves, murderers included, who had been sentenced to death. They were instructed that these political bastards had to be squeezed, in return for which the thieves would get relaxation of their sentences. The thieves set to with a will to carry out instructions so pleasant and so completely to their taste. They were named monitors and assistant monitors—the nickname of one has been preserved: "Moroz" ("Frost")—and they went around with clubs, beating up these former Communists and mocking them in every way they knew: compelled them to carry them piggyback, grabbed their clothes, defecated in them, and burned them in the stove. In one tent the politicals hurled themselves on the thieves and tried to kill them, but the thieves raised an outcry, and the convoy opened fire from outside to protect the "socially friendly" elements.

It was, above all, this humiliation by the thieves that broke the unity and will of the recent strikers.

At the Old Brickyard, in cold and tattered shelters, in the wretched unwarming stove, the revolutionary gusts of two decades of cruelty and change burned themselves out.

And the Russian tradition of political struggle also, it seems, lived out its last days.

Nonetheless, thanks to the eternal human trait of clinging to hope, the prisoners in the Old Brickyard waited to be sent to some new project. For several months they had endured agonies there, and it was quite unbearable. And then truly, early on the morning of April 22 (we are not fully certain of the date, but that, after all, was Lenin's birthday), they began to assemble a prisoner transport—of two hundred persons. Those summoned were given their bags, which they placed on sledges. The convoy guards led the column east, into the tundra, where there was no dwelling nearby, though Salekhard lay in the distance. The thieves rode in back on the sledges with the things. Those who remained behind noticed only one unusual thing: occasionally bags would fall off the sledges, but no one bothered to pick them up.

The column marched along in good spirits. They were expecting some kind of new life, some kind of new activity, which, even if fatiguing, would be no worse than all that waiting. The sledges had fallen far behind. The convoy itself began to fall behind—no longer ahead or at their sides but only at their rear. So what! This laxity of the convoy was a good sign.

The sun shone.

Then all of a sudden, rapid machine-gun fire began to descend on the black moving column of zeks, from invisible emplacements, from out of the blinding snowy wastes. Some prisoners started to fall, while others still stood, no one understanding a thing.

Death came in sunny and snowy garments, innocent, merciful.

All this was a fantasy on the subject of the coming war. From snow-covered temporary emplacements the murderers rose up in their Arctic cloaks (they say the majority of them were Georgians) and ran to the column and finished off with revolvers all those still alive. Not far off were the previously prepared pits to which the newly arrived thieves began to drag the corpses. To the chagrin of the thieves, the dead men's things were burned.

On the twenty-third and the twenty-fourth of April, another 760 persons were shot in the same place in the same way.

And ninety-three were transported back to Vorkuta. These were the thieves, and, evidently, the stoolie provocateurs.[2]

Such were the main "Kashketin" executions.[3]

But some transports of condemned zeks arrived too late, and they continued to arrive with five to ten people at a time. A detachment of killers would receive them at the Old Brickyard station and *lead* them to the old bathhouse—to a booth lined with three or four layers of blankets inside. There the condemned prisoners were ordered to undress in the snow and enter the bath naked. Inside, they were shot with pistols. In the course of one and a half months about two hundred persons were destroyed in this way. The corpses were burned in the tundra.

The Old Brickyard shed and Ukhtarka were burned down. (And the "bath" was put onto a railroad flatcar and taken to the 191st milepost of the narrow-gauge railroad and dumped. There it was found and studied by my friend. It was saturated with blood on the inside, and its walls were riddled with holes.)

But the executions of the Trotskyites did not end there. Some

2. The names of some of them were Roitman, Istnyuk, Model (an editor in Goslitizdat), Aliyev. And one of the thieves was called Tadik Nikolayevsky. We cannot say for sure precisely why each of them was spared, but it is hard to imagine any other cause.

3. I collected this information from two zeks with whom I was imprisoned. One was *there* and had been spared. The other was a very inquisitive person, who at that time was passionately determined to write the whole story, and who had been able to see these places by tracking down the warm trails and questioning whoever he could about it.

thirty or so others who had still not been shot were gradually assembled and then executed not far from Number Thirty. But this time it was done by other people. And the first detachment of killers, those Chekists and convoy guards, and also those thieves, who had participated in the "Kashketin executions," were also shot soon afterward as witnesses.

In 1938 Kashketin himself was awarded the Order of Lenin "for special services to the Party and the government." And one year later he was shot in Lefortovo.

Nor could one say this was the first time this had happened in history.

A. B——v has told how executions were carried out at Adak —a camp on the Pechora River. They would take the opposition members "with their things" out of the camp compound on a prisoner transport at night. And outside the compound stood the small house of the Third Section. The condemned men were taken into a room one at a time, and there the camp guards sprang on them. Their mouths were stuffed with something soft and their arms were bound with cords behind their backs. Then they were led out into the courtyard, where harnessed carts were waiting. The bound prisoners were piled on the carts, from five to seven at a time, and driven off to the "Gorka"—the camp cemetery. On arrival they were tipped into big pits that had already been prepared and *buried alive*. Not out of brutality, no. It had been ascertained that when dragging and lifting them, it was much easier to cope with living people than with corpses.

This work went on for many nights at Adak.

And that is how the moral-political unity of our Party was achieved.

Chapter 14

■

Changing One's Fate!

To defend yourself in that savage world was impossible. To go on strike was suicide. To go on hunger strikes was useless.

And as for dying, there would always be time.

So what was left for the prisoner? To break out! To go *change one's fate!* (The zeks also called escape "the green prosecutor." It was the only popular prosecutor among them. Like all the other prosecutors, he, too, left many cases in their previous situation or in an even worse situation than before—but sometimes he freed them outright. He was the green forest. He was the bushes and the greensward.)

Chekhov used to say that if a prisoner was not a philosopher who could get along equally well in all possible circumstances (or let us put it this way: who could retire into himself) then he could *not* but wish to escape and he *ought to* wish to.

He could not but wish to! That was the imperative of a free soul. True, the natives of the Archipelago were far from being like that. They were much more submissive than that. But even among them there were always those who thought about escape or who were just about to. The continual escapes in one or another place, even those that did not succeed, were a true proof that the energy of the zeks had not yet been lost.

Here is a camp compound. (Illustration No. 36.) It is well guarded; the fence is strong and the inner cordon area is reliable and the watchtowers are set out correctly—every spot is open to view and open to fire. But all of a sudden you grow sick to death of the thought that you are condemned to die right here on this

36. Camp compound

bit of fenced-off land. So why not try your luck? Why not burst out and change your fate? This impulse is particularly strong at the beginning of your term of imprisonment, in the first year, and it is not even deliberate. In that first year when, generally speaking, the prisoner's entire future and whole prison personality are being decided. Later on this impulse weakens somehow; there is no longer the conviction that it is more important for you to be *out there*, and all the threads binding you to the outer world weaken, and the cauterizing of the soul is transformed into decay, and the human being settles into camp harness.

During all the years of the camps, there were evidently quite a few escapes. Here are some statistics accidentally come by: In the month of March, 1930, alone, 1,328 persons escaped from imprisonment in the R.S.F.S.R.[1] (And how inaudible and soundless this was in our society.)

With the enormous development of the Archipelago after 1937, particularly during the war years, when battle-fit infantrymen were rounded up and sent to the front, it became even more difficult to provide proper convoy, and not even the evil notion of self-guarding could solve all the problems of the chiefs. Simul-

1. TsGAOR, collection 393, shelf 84, file 4, sheet 68.

taneously with that there was the hankering to get from the camps as much economic profit and production and labor as possible—and this compelled, particularly in logging operations, the dispatch of work parties and subparties on distant assignments and their extension into more remote areas—and the guard supposedly surrounding them became ever more illusory, ever more unreal.

By 1939, on some of the auxiliary expeditions of the Ust-Vym Camp, instead of a perimeter fence surrounding the camp there were only pole or wattle palings and *no* nighttime illumination—in other words, at night no one kept the prisoners from departing! Even in the *penalty* camp in this camp complex, when the prisoners were taken into the forests for work, there was only one armed guard for a brigade of prisoners. It is obvious that he had no way to keep track of them. And seventy men escaped from there during the summer of 1939. (One even escaped twice in one day: before lunch and after lunch!) However, *sixty* returned. And there was no news of the rest.

But that was in the wilderness. In Moscow itself three very easy escapes took place while I was there: from the camp sector at Kaluga Gates during the day, when a young thief climbed the fence of the work compound (and, with his thief's talent for braggadocio, sent the camp a postcard the *next* day saying he was off to Sochi and sending his best wishes to the camp chief); from the Marfino minicamp near the Botanical Gardens, the girl I have already written about; and, from the same place, a young nonpolitical offender jumped on a bus and went off to the center of town. True, he had been left entirely without any guard at all; ganged up on us, the MGB took a cavalier attitude toward the loss of a nonpolitical offender.

In all likelihood they did some arithmetic in Gulag one bright day and became convinced that it was much cheaper to permit a certain percentage of zek losses than to establish a truly strict guard over all the many thousand points of imprisonment.

And at the same time they relied on certain invisible chains which kept the natives reliably in their place.

The strongest of these chains was the prisoners' universal submission and total surrender to their situation as slaves. Almost to a man, both the 58's and the nonpolitical offenders were hard-working family people capable of manifesting valor only in law-

ful ways, on the orders of and the approval of the higher-ups. Even when they had been imprisoned for five and ten years they could not imagine that singly—or, God forbid, collectively—they might rise up for their liberty since they saw arrayed against them the state (*their own* state), the NKVD, the police, the guards, and the police dogs. And even if you were fortunate enough to escape unscathed, how could you live afterward on a false passport, with a false name, when documents were checked at every intersection, when suspicious eyes followed passers-by from behind every gateway? And the universal mood in the corrective-labor camps was: Why are you standing there with your rifles, what are you watching us for? Even if you disperse, we'll make no move to go anywhere; we are not criminals, why should we escape? And we are going to be freed in a year anyway! (Amnesty . . .) K. Strakhovich relates that in 1942 his prisoner transport train was bombed while they were being taken to Uglich. The convoy scattered, and the zeks stayed right there, waiting for it to return. There are many such stories, like the story of the bookkeeper of the Ortaussky Division of Karlag: they sent him a distance of twenty-five miles with his financial report, accompanied by one convoy guard. And on the way back he not only had to haul the dead-drunk convoy guard in a cart, but also to take particular care of his rifle so the poor fool wouldn't be tried for losing it.

Another chain was *the death factory*—camp starvation. Although it was precisely this starvation that at times drove the despairing to wander through the taiga in the hope of finding more food than there was in camp, yet it was this starvation that also weakened them so that they had no strength for a long flight, and because of it it was impossible to save up a stock of food for the journey.

And there was another chain too—the threat of a new term. A political prisoner was given a new tenner for an escape attempt under that same Article 58 (and gradually it proved best to give Article 58-14—Counter-Revolutionary Sabotage). The thieves, it's true, were given Article 82 (pure escape) and two years in all, but up to 1947 they got no more than two years for theft and also robbery, so these were of comparable magnitude. Furthermore, camp was their "native home." In camp they did not starve, they did not work—their smartest move was not to

escape but to serve out their term, all the more so because they might always benefit from special privileges or amnesties. Escape for a thief was merely the sport of a well-fed, healthy body and an explosion of impatient greed: to get out and go on a spree, to rob, drink, rape, show off. The only serious escapes among them were by bandits and murderers with long terms.

(The thieves love to lie about their nonexistent escapes or wildly embroider the ones they did carry out. They will tell you how *India* [the barracks of thieves] received the challenge banner for the best preparations for winter—for the substantial amount of earth piled around the barracks wall—and they will claim they were digging a tunnel at the same time and taking the earth out right under the chiefs' eyes. Don't believe them! All "India" wouldn't escape, and they wouldn't want to dig very long because they needed easier and quicker ways; and the chiefs weren't so stupid as not to see where they were getting the earth from. The thief Korzinkin, with ten convictions on his record, a commandant trusted by his chief, really did escape, well dressed, and really did pass himself off as an assistant prosecutor, but he had to add to that story how he spent the night in the same hut as the commissioner for catching escapees [they really did exist], stole his uniform, his gun, and even his dog one night—and from then on passed himself off as the commissioner. He is lying through his teeth about all this. In their fantasies and stories the thieves always had to be more heroic than they really were.)

Another thing restraining the zeks was not the compound but the privilege of going without convoy. The ones guarded the least, who enjoyed the small privilege of going to work and back without a bayonet at their backs, or once in a while dropping into the free settlement, highly prized their advantages. And after an escape these were taken away.

The geography of the Archipelago was also a solid obstacle to escape attempts—those endless expanses of snow or sandy desert, tundra, taiga. The Kolyma, even though it was not an island, was more bitter than any island; it was a piece torn off from the rest and where could you escape to from the Kolyma? People undertook escapes from there only out of desperation. It is true that there was a time when the Yakuts were hospitable to the prisoners and undertook to help them: "Nine suns—and I will take you to Khabarovsk." They took them there, too, on their reindeer. But

then escaped thieves began to plunder the Yakuts and the Yakuts changed toward the fugitives and started to turn them in.

The hostility of the surrounding population, encouraged by the authorities, became the principal hindrance to escapes. The authorities were not stingy about rewarding the captors. (This was an additional form of political indoctrination.) And the nationalities inhabiting the areas around Gulag gradually came to assume that the capture of a fugitive meant a holiday, enrichment, that it was like a good hunt or like finding a small gold nugget. The Tungus, the Komis, and the Kazakhs were paid off in flour and tea, and in densely settled areas the trans-Volga people living near the Burepolom and Unzha camps were paid for each captured fugitive at the rate of two poods—seventy-two pounds—of flour, eight yards of cloth, and several pounds of herring. During the war years there was no other way to get herring, and local inhabitants simply nicknamed the fugitives *herrings*. In the village of Sherstka, for example, when any stranger appeared, the children would run along in a group shouting: "Mama! There's a herring coming!"

And what about the geologists? Those pioneers of the northern wastes, those brave, bearded, booted heroes, those Jack London bold-hearts! A fugitive had little hope of help from our Soviet geologists, and it was better not to come near their bonfires. The Leningrad engineer Abrosimov, arrested in the "Promparty" wave and sentenced to a "tenner," escaped from the Nivagres Camp in 1933. He wandered about in the taiga for twenty-one days, and he was delighted to meet up with some geologists. But they took him off to a settlement and handed him over to the chairman of the local trade union organization. (You can understand the geologists too: After all, they were not alone and they were afraid of being turned in by someone in their group. And what if the fugitive was really a criminal, a murderer—and would knife them in the night?)

A captured fugitive, if he was dead when taken, might be thrown near the camp mess hall to lie for several days with a rotting bullet wound—so the prisoners would value their thin gruel more highly. One taken alive might be set in front of the gatehouse, and whenever a column passed they would set the dogs on him. (And the dogs, depending on the command given, could suffocate a person, bite him, or merely tear his clothes off, leaving him naked.) And one could also make a placard in the Cul-

tural and Educational Section, saying: "I escaped, but the dogs caught me." And this placard could be hung around the fugitive's neck and he could be ordered to walk around the camp wearing it.

And if he was beaten, then they had to burst his kidneys. If his hands were screwed into handcuffs, then it had to be done so that the feeling in his radial wrist joints would be lost for good (G. Sorokin, Ivdellag). Or if he was put into a punishment cell, he shouldn't come out without TB. (Nyroblag, Baranov, escape in 1944. After being beaten by the convoy he coughed up blood, and three years later they had to remove his left lung.)[2]

Properly speaking, to beat the fugitive to within an inch of his life and to kill him were the principal forms of combating escapes in the Archipelago.[3] And even if no escapes occurred for a long time—then they sometimes had to be manufactured. At the Debin goldfields in the Kolyma in 1951 a group of zeks was permitted to go out to gather berries. Three got lost—and disappeared. The camp chief, Senior Lieutenant Pyotr Lomaga, sent torturers. They loosed their dogs on the three sleeping men, then smashed their skulls with the butts of their rifles until their heads were a mass of pulp and their brains hung out—and in that state hauled them on a cart to the camp. Here the horse was replaced by four prisoners, who had to drag the cart past the whole line-up. "That's how it will be for everybody!" proclaimed Lomaga.

And who can find inside himself the desperation to keep from shuddering in the face of all that—and go on! and go on! and go on!——and arrive—but *arrive* where? There, at the end of the escape, when the fugitive attained his destined and designated goal —who was there who wouldn't be afraid to meet him, to hide him, to look after him? It was only the thieves who were awaited out in freedom at a prearranged *hangout*. For us 58's such an apartment would be called a *conspiratorial address*, and that was nearly an underground organization.

That is how many obstacles and pitfalls there were in the path of escape.

But the desperate heart sometimes did not weigh things. It

2. And today he is naïvely seeking to have his illness recognized as an *occupational* illness, for the sake of his pension. How could it be more occupational, one would think, for both prisoner and convoy! Yet they refuse to recognize it as such.

3. And it has become increasingly the principal form in the most recent, Khrushchevian, period as well. See Anatoly Marchenko's *Moi Pokazaniya* (*My Testimony*).*

saw: the river was flowing and a log was floating down it—and one jump! We'll float on down. Vyacheslav Bezrodny from the Olchan Camp, barely released from the hospital, still utterly weak, escaped down the Indigirka River on two logs fastened together—to the Arctic Ocean! Where was he going? And what was he hoping for? In the end he was not so much caught as picked up on the open sea and returned over the winter road to Olchan to that very same hospital.

It is not possible to say of everyone who didn't return to camp on his own, who was not brought in half alive, or who was not brought in dead, that he had escaped. Perhaps he had only exchanged an involuntary and long-drawn-out death in camp for the free death of a beast in the taiga.

To the degree that the fugitives didn't so much escape as merely wander around and return on their own—the camp security chiefs even derived benefits from them: without any strain they would *wrap another term* around them. And if no escapes took place for a long time, they arranged provocations: some stoolie or other was given instructions to set up an "escape group," and all of them would be arrested.

But a man who seriously undertook to escape became very swiftly fearsome. Some of them set fire to the taiga behind them in order to get the dogs off their trail. And it would burn for weeks over dozens of miles. In 1949, on a meadow near the Veslyanka State Farm, a fugitive was detained with human flesh in his knapsack; he had killed an unconvoyed artist with a five-year term who had crossed his path, had cut his flesh off, and had not yet had the chance to cook it.

In the spring of 1947 in the Kolyma, near Elgen, two convoy guards were leading a column of zeks. And suddenly one zek, without any prior agreement with anyone, skillfully attacked the convoy guards on his own, disarmed them, and shot them both. (His name is unknown, but he turned out to have been a recent front-line officer. A rare and bright example of a front-line soldier who had not lost his courage in camp!) The bold fellow announced to the column that it was free! But the prisoners were overwhelmed with horror; no one followed his lead, and they all sat down right there and waited for a new convoy. The front-line officer shamed them, but in vain. And then he took up the rifles (thirty-two cartridges, "thirty-one for *them!*") and left alone. He

killed and wounded several pursuers and with his thirty-second cartridge he shot himself. The entire Archipelago might well have collapsed if all former front-liners had behaved as he did.

In Kraslag a former soldier, a hero of Khalkhin-Gol, attacked a convoy guard with an ax, stunned him with the butt, took his rifle and thirty cartridges. The dogs were sent after him. He killed two of them and wounded the dog trainer. When they caught him, they didn't just shoot him but went crazy and avenged themselves and their dogs, riddling the corpse with their bayonets and leaving it to lie that way for a week by the gatehouse.

In 1951 in that same Kraslag, some ten long-termers were being convoyed by four infantrymen among the guards. Suddenly the zeks attacked the convoy, took away their automatic weapons, put on their uniforms (but they had mercy on the soldiers—the oppressed were often more magnanimous than the oppressors), and four of them, convoying *with braggadocio*, conducted their comrades to the narrow-gauge railroad. There was an empty car there, ready for timber. The false convoy went up to the locomotive and forced the crew to disembark. (One of them was a locomotive engineer.) They drove the train at full speed to the Reshoty Station on the trunk line of the Trans-Siberian. But they had about forty miles to cover. And meanwhile they had already been reported, starting with the guards they'd spared. Several times they had to shoot their way past groups of guards, and several miles before Reshoty the authorities succeeded in mining the track in front of them and put a battalion of camp guards into position. All the fugitives perished in the unequal battle.

The *quiet* escapes were usually more fortunate in their results. Some of them were surprisingly successful. But we rarely hear of these happy stories; *those who broke out* do not give interviews; they have changed their names, and they are in hiding. Kuzikov-Skachinsky, who escaped successfully in 1942, tells the story now only because he was caught in 1959—after seventeen years.[4]

And we have learned of the successful escape of Zinaida

4. Here is how he was discovered: The man who had fled with him got caught in another case. They managed to establish his true identity by his fingerprints. In this way they discovered that the fugitive had not perished, as they had formerly supposed. They started to track down Kuzikov too. For this they conducted careful inquiries in his home region and put his relatives under surveillance—and through a chain of relatives they got to him. And they spared neither effort nor time for all of this at seventeen years' remove!

Yakovlevna Povalyayeva because in the end it fell through. She got her term because she had stayed on as a teacher in her school during the German occupation. But she was not immediately arrested when the Soviet armies arrived, and before her arrest she was married to a pilot. Then she was arrested and sent to Mine No. 8 at Vorkuta. Through some Chinese working in the kitchen she established communication with freedom and with her husband. He was employed in civil aviation and arranged a trip to Vorkuta for himself. On an appointed day Zina went to the bath in the work zone, where she shed her camp clothing and released her hair, which had been curled the night before, from under her head scarf. Her husband was waiting for her in the work sector. There were security officers on duty at the river ferry, but they paid no attention to a girl with curly hair who was arm in arm with a flier. They flew out on a plane. Zina spent one year living on false papers. But she couldn't resist the desire to see her mother again—and her mother was under surveillance. At her new interrogation she managed to convince them she had escaped in a coal car. And they never did find out about her husband's participation.

In 1946 Janis L——s walked from his camp in Perm to Latvia, speaking fractured Russian the whole way and barely able to explain himself. His departure from camp was simple: he sprinted, broke through a rickety fence, and stepped over it. But later in a swampy forest—with bast sandals on his feet—he had to live for a long time on berries alone. One day he managed to take a village cow off into the woods and kill it. He ate his fill of beef and managed to make himself some primitive shoes from the cow's hide. In another place he stole a sheepskin coat from a peasant (a fugitive to whom the inhabitants are hostile unwillingly becomes the inhabitants' enemy). In populated places L——s claimed to be a Latvian conscript who had lost his documents. And although the universal inspection of passes had not yet been abolished that year, in Leningrad, which to him was a strange city, he managed without uttering a word to get to the Warsaw Station and to walk another two and a half miles along the tracks and board a train there. (But there was one thing L——s was firmly assured of: when he got to Latvia he would be fearlessly hidden—and that, of course, gave point to his escape.)

The kind of escape L——s undertook required a peasant's dexterity, grasp, and energy. But what about a city dweller, yes, an old man at that, sentenced to five years for repeating an anecdote, was he capable of escaping? It turns out that he was when a more certain death was the only outcome of staying in his own camp, a small camp, between Moscow and Gorky, for nonpolitical offenders on their last legs, which had been manufacturing shells since 1941. Well, five years was a "child's term," you might say, but the unfortunate anecdote teller would not have lasted out even five months if he was driven out to work without being fed. This escape was a gesture of despair, a brief impulse, for which there would have been neither the judgment nor the strength half a minute later. A routine train had been shunted into the camp and loaded with shells. And a convoy sergeant came marching along it, followed by a railroadman who had fallen several cars behind; the sergeant opened the door of each *red cattle car* and checked to be sure no one was in there, then shut the door, and the railroadman put a seal on it. And our ill-starred famished last-legger of an anecdote teller,[5] behind the back of the sergeant, who had gone on past and in front of the railroadman, scrambled into a car. It was not easy for him to clamber up, and it was not easy to push the door back noiselessly, and it was all very impractical, it was a sure failure, and he closed the door behind him, with his heart skipping a beat, he was already sorry he had started. The sergeant would return and would kick him with his boots and any moment now the railroadman would shout. Already someone was touching the door—it was the railroadman putting on the seal! (And I myself think: maybe the good railroadman saw him—and pretended not to?) The train moved off, out of the compound. The train moved off to the front. This fugitive was unprepared. He didn't even have a piece of bread. In the course of three days he would almost certainly die in this moving voluntary-punishment cell. He wouldn't get to the front, and it wasn't the front he needed. What was he to do? How could he save himself now? He saw that the shell boxes were packed with a steel band around them. With his naked defenseless hands he tore that steel ribbon, and with it sawed through the floor of the

5. All this happened in exactly this way, but his name has not been preserved.

railroad car in a place where there weren't any boxes. This was impossible for an old man? But was it possible to die? And if they opened it and caught him—was that possible? Furthermore, the boxes had wire loops attached to them, to carry them by. He cut off the loops, and out of them he made similar but much larger loops and tied them so that they hung down through the crawl hole he had cut. How exhausted he was! How hard it was to get his torn hands to do what he wanted them to! How dearly that repeated anecdote was costing him! He didn't wait for a station, but carefully let himself down through the hole while the train was in motion, and lay with both feet in one loop near the rear of the train, and his shoulders in another. The train moved on, and the fugitive hung suspended there, rocking back and forth. The speed slackened, and at that moment he decided to let go; he dropped his feet, and his feet dragged along and dragged the rest of him down. This was a sure death act, a circus act—but, after all, they might send a telegram after the train and search the cars. After all, they would have missed him in the camp compound by now. He could not straighten out. He could not raise his head. He clung to the ties. He closed his eyes, ready for death. The accelerated clicking of the last cars—then lovely silence. The fugitive opened his eyes and rolled over: all he could see was the red light of the departing train! Freedom!

But that was not yet salvation. Freedom was freedom, but he had neither documents nor money, he was dressed in camp rags, and he was doomed. Swollen and torn, somehow he managed to get to a station, and there mingled with a recently arrived Leningrad train; evacuated semicorpses were being led by the hand and fed hot food at the station. But that would not have saved him either—except that in the train he found a dying friend and took his documents, and he knew all about his past too. They were all sent to a place near Saratov, and for several years, until the war was over, he lived there on a poultry farm. And then he was seized with a longing to see his daughter and went off to find her.

He looked for her in Nalchik, in Armavir, and he found her in Uzhgorod. During this time she had married a border guard. She had believed her father happily dead and buried, and now she listened to his story with horror and revulsion. Although she was quite devout in her civic conscientiousness, she nevertheless re-

tained shameful vestiges of kinship and she did not denounce her father but merely drove him from her door. There were no other relatives of the old man left. He lived a meaningless existence, wandering like a nomad from city to city. He became a dope addict. In Baku he smoked hashish and was picked up by an ambulance and while under the influence of the drug gave his right name, though when he came to, he gave the name under which he had been living. It was one of our Soviet hospitals, which certainly couldn't treat him without first establishing his identity. A comrade was summoned from State Security—and in 1952, ten years after his escape, the old man got twenty-five years. (It was this that gave him the happy chance to tell his own story in prison cells and thus to enter history.)

Sometimes the subsequent life of a successful fugitive was more dramatic than the escape itself. That is how it must have been with Sergei Andreyevich Chebotaryov, who has already been mentioned more than once in this book. In 1914 he became an employee of the Chinese Eastern Railroad (the KVZhD). In February, 1917, he became a Bolshevik. In 1929, during the period of the KVZhD hostilities, he was imprisoned in a Chinese prison, and in 1931 he and his wife, Yelena Prokofyevna, and his sons, Gennady and Viktor, returned to their homeland. The Fatherland then operated in its usual way: Within a few days he himself was arrested; his wife went insane; his sons were turned over to *different* orphanages, and were given new patronymics and surnames, even though they well remembered their own and objected. At first Chebotaryov was given only three years by the Far Eastern troika of the OGPU (another *troika!*)—because of their inexperience; but soon he was seized again, tortured, and resentenced to ten years without the right of correspondence (what was there for him to write about now?), and even confinement under intensified guard during the revolutionary holidays. The severity of this sentence unexpectedly helped him. In 1934 he was moved to Karlag, where he worked on building a railroad to Mointy. While there, during the May holidays of 1936, he was confined in the penalty isolator, and they threw in with him the *free employee* Avtonom Vasilyevich Chupin under the same conditions as himself. Whether he was drunk or sober isn't clear, but at any rate Chebotaryov managed to filch his three-month identification certificate, which had expired six months earlier

and which had been issued by his village soviet. This certificate virtually obliged him to escape! And on May 8 Chebotaryov left the Mointy Camp, dressed in civilian clothes, without a scrap of camp clothing on him or with him, and with two half-liter bottles in his pockets like a typical drunk, except that they held not vodka but water. Ahead of him stretched the salt-marsh steppes. Twice he fell into the hands of Kazakhs who were on their way to work on the railroad, but since he knew a little Kazakh, "I played on their religious feelings and they let me go."[6] At the western edge of Lake Balkhash he was detained by a Security Operations post of Karlag. Taking his document, they asked him to give all sorts of information about himself and his relatives, and the supposed Chupin answered correctly from memory. Here again he had a lucky accident (without such lucky accidents people probably get caught). The head of the operations group came into the dugout, and Chupin beat him to the draw: "Hey! Nikolai, how are you? Don't you recognize me?" (This split-second calculation was based on facial wrinkles and a contest in remembering faces: I recognize you all right, but if you recognize me, I'm a goner!) "No, I don't recognize you." "Well, how about that! We were traveling on a train together! Your name is Naidyonov, and you were telling me how you met Olya at the station in Sverdlovsk—you met in a train compartment and after that you got married." It was all true. Naidyonov was astonished; they had a smoke together and they let the fugitive go. (Oh, you bluecaps! Not for nothing do they teach you to keep silent! You must not give in to the human impulse to frankness. You told this story, not in a railroad car, but when you were on an assignment at the tree nursery of Karlag a year before, and you told it to the prisoners, just like that, out of foolishness, and you could never have remembered all the mugs of those who listened to the story. And in all likelihood he had told this story on a train too, more than once—it was the kind of story to tell on trains. And Chebotaryov's bold play was based on that!) Joyfully Chupin went farther along the highway to Chu Station,

6. Religion can have its uses even for an atheist! I affirmed earlier that orthodox Communists did not make escape attempts. Chebotaryov was not one. But he was not entirely devoid of materialism either. I imagine that among the Kazakhs the recollection of the Budenny repression of 1930 was still very much alive, because they were good to him. Things wouldn't be like that in 1950.

past the lake and on south. For the most part he traveled at night, and hid in the high reeds whenever automobile headlights approached. During the day he lay down in them (there were reed jungles there). There were fewer and fewer operations men about. At that time the Archipelago had not yet cast its metastases into those areas.[7] He had bread and sugar with him and he made them last, and for five days he went along without any water at all. After 125 miles of walking he reached the station and got on a train.

And then began his *free*—no, poisoned—years, because Chebotaryov couldn't risk settling down or staying too long in one place. That same year, several months later, he ran into his own *camp godfather* in the city park in Frunze! But that was in passing, it was a festive occasion with music and girls, and the godfather failed to recognize him. He had to leave the job he had found. (The senior bookkeeper questioned him and guessed the urgent reasons—but turned out to be a Solovki veteran himself.) He had to move on. At first he would not take the risk of seeking out his family, but afterward he worked out how to. He wrote to a woman cousin in Ufa: "Where are Lena and the children? Guess who is writing you. Don't tell *her* yet." And the return address was some kind of Zirabulak station, a man named Chupin. And the cousin replied: "The children are lost and your wife is in Novosibirsk." Then Chebotaryov asked her to go to Novosibirsk to tell his wife—but only face to face—that her husband had reappeared and wanted to send money. The cousin went—and now his own wife wrote to him: she was in a psychiatric hospital; her passport had been lost; she had to get through three months of forced labor; and she couldn't receive money sent general delivery. His heart leaped; he had to go to her! And her husband sent her an insane telegram: "Meet me on train such-and-such, car such-and-such." The heart is ever defenseless against emotion, but it is not, praise God, immune to premonitions. These premonitions so played on his mind while he was en route that he got off the train two stations before Novosibirsk and hitched a ride in a passing automobile. Having checked his luggage at the baggage room, he went recklessly to his wife's

7. But soon afterward the Korean exiles were sent there, and later the Germans, and then all the nations. Seventeen years later I ended up there myself.

address. He knocked! The door was open and there was no one in the house. (This first coincidence was an ill omen: the landlord had spent the whole day on guard in order to warn him about the ambush waiting for him—but at that very moment had gone out to get water!) He went on in. His wife was not there. On a cot lay a Chekist covered with his coat and snoring loudly. (This second coincidence was a benign omen!) Chebotaryov fled. At that moment he was hailed by the landlord—a fellow acquaintance from the KVZhD, not yet arrested. Apparently his son-in-law was a Security man and had brought the telegram home himself and shaken it in front of Chebotaryov's wife: This rat of yours, he's running right into our hands of his own accord! They had gone to the train—and hadn't found him; the second Security man had left for a moment and this other had lain down to rest. Nonetheless Chebotaryov managed to get hold of his wife, and they went several stations down the line in a car and got on a train to Uzbekistan. In Leninabad they registered their marriage again! That is, without divorcing Chebotaryov she now married Chupin! But they could not make up their minds to live together. They sent inquiries in every direction in her name in an attempt to find the children—but in vain. And that was the sort of separated and tormented life they led before the war. In 1941 Chupin was called up for military service and became a radio operator in the 61st Cavalry Division. On one occasion he was careless and called cigarettes and matches by their Chinese names, as a joke. In what normal country could something like that arouse suspicion—merely because a man knew some foreign words? In our country it did. And the stoolies were right there. And Political Commissar Sokolov, Security officer of the 219th Cavalry Regiment, was questioning him within the hour: "Where did you learn Chinese?" Chupin: "Only those two words." "Did you serve on the KVZhD?" (Service abroad is immediately viewed as a grave sin!) The Security officer also set the stoolies on him, but they found nothing. So, just to be certain, he arrested him under 58-10 anyway:

- Because he did not believe the Sovinformbureau communiqués
- Because he had said that the Germans had more equipment (as if everyone had not seen that with their own eyes)

Well, there's more than one way to skin a cat! Court-martial! Death sentence. And Chebotaryov was so fed up with life in the Fatherland *he didn't even petition* for mercy. But the state needed working hands, so he got ten years plus five muzzled. Once again he was back in his "native home." He served (with time off for work) *nine* years.

And there was yet another chance encounter. In camp another zek, N. F——v, called him over to a far corner of the upper bunks and there asked him quietly: "What's your name?" "Avtonom Vasilich." "And what province were you born in?" "Tyumen." "What district? What village soviet?" Chebotaryov-Chupin gave all the correct answers and heard: "You're lying. I worked on the same locomotive as Avtonom Chupin for five years, I know him as well as I know myself. Was it you who swiped his documents one day in May, 1936?" Now that's the kind of invisible underwater anchor a fugitive can rip open his belly on! What novelist would be believed if he were to think up an encounter like that? By that time Chebotaryov again wanted to survive and warmly shook that good man's hand when the latter said: "Don't be afraid, I won't go to the godfather. I'm not a bastard!"

And thus it was that Chebotaryov served out his second term, as Chupin. But to his misfortune his last camp was a top-secret one, one of that group of atomic projects—Moscow-10, Tura-38, Sverdlovsk-39, and Chelyabinsk-40. They were engaged in separating uranium-radium ores, and construction was proceeding according to Kurchatov's plans, and the construction chief was Lieutenant General Tkachenko, who was subordinate only to Stalin and Beria. Every quarter the zeks had to renew their pledges of "nondisclosure." But this was not the real trouble—the real trouble was that those released were not allowed to return home. The "released" prisoners were sent off in a large group in September, 1950—to the Kolyma! Only there were they relieved of convoy and declared to be *a particularly dangerous special contingent!* They were dangerous because they had helped make the atomic bomb! (How can one really keep up with all this and describe it? Chapters and chapters are necessary!) There were tens of thousands of similar ones scattered all over the Kolyma!! (Look through the Constitution! Look through the Codes! What do they say about *special contingents??*)

Well, at least he could send for his wife now! She came to him at the Maldyak goldfields. And from there they began to seek their sons again—but the replies were all negative: "No." "Not listed here."

Stalin kicked the bucket—and the old folks moved from the Kolyma to the Caucasus—to warm their bones. Things eased up, though slowly. And in 1959 their son Viktor, a Kiev lathe operator, decided to get rid of his hateful new name and declared himself to be the son of the enemy of the people Chebotaryov! And a year later his parents found him! And now the father's problem was to regain the name of Chebotaryov himself (*thrice* rehabilitated, by then he could no longer be charged for the escape). He came out into the open. His fingerprints were sent to Moscow for comparison. The old man got back his peace of mind only when all three of them were issued passports in the name of Chebotaryov; and his daughter-in-law also became Chebotaryov. (But a few years later he wrote to me that he already regretted having found Viktor; he abuses his father as a criminal and the source of all his misfortunes, and waves away the re-

37. The Chebotaryovs

habilitation certificates: "A fake!"[8] And his elder son, Gennady, never has been found.) (Illustration No. 37: the Chebotaryov family.)

From all the cases I have reported it is clear that even a successful escape still couldn't bring freedom, but merely a life constantly oppressed and threatened. This was very well understood by some of the fugitives—by those who in the camps had succeeded in breaking away from the Fatherland politically; by those, too, who lived by the ignorant illiterate principle of *just living!* And it was not altogether rare to find among the fugitives some (in case of failure, they had their answer ready: "We escaped in order to go to the Central Committee and ask to have our cases reopened") whose purpose was escape to the West and who considered only that kind of escape complete.

These escapes are the hardest of all to talk about. Those who did not make it are in the damp earth. Those who were caught again are silent. Those who left in some cases surfaced in the West but in some cases, because of someone left behind, are still silent. There were rumors that in Chukotka some zeks captured a plane and seven of them flew to Alaska. But what I think is: they merely tried to seize one and their plan failed.

All these cases will continue to languish in secrecy for a long time to come, and grow old, and lose their relevance, just like this manuscript, and like everything truthful written in our country.

Here is one such case, and once again human memory has failed to preserve the name of the heroic fugitive. He was from Odessa, and in his civilian profession he was a mechanical engineer, and in the army a captain. He finished the war in Austria and served in the occupation forces in Vienna. He was arrested in 1948 on the basis of a denunciation and was charged and sentenced under Article 58 to twenty-five years, as was the norm by then. He was sent off to Siberia, to a camp located 180 miles from Taishet, in other words far from the main line of the Trans-Siberian. He very soon began to weaken at logging. But he retained the will to fight for life and his memory of Vienna. And from there—yes, *from there*—he succeeded in escaping to Vienna! Incredible!

8. And now the old man has fallen silent. I fear . . . he may have died.

Their logging sector was bordered by a cut which was kept under surveillance from small watchtowers. On the chosen day he had a bread ration with him at work. He felled a thickly branched pine across the cut and beneath its branches crawled to its top. It wasn't tall enough to span the entire cut, but, continuing to crawl, he made it across successfully. He took an ax with him. It was summer. He made his way through the taiga in windfallen woods. The walking was very difficult, but on the other hand, he didn't run into anyone for a whole month. Tying up the sleeves and collar of his shirt, he caught fish in it and ate them raw. He collected cedar nuts, mushrooms, and berries. Half dead, he nonetheless managed to get to the Trans-Siberian trunk line and happily went to sleep in a haystack. He was roused by voices: they were picking up the hay with pitchforks and had already found him. He was fagged out and prepared neither to run away nor to put up a fight. And he said: "Well, all right, take me. Turn me in; I am a fugitive." There stood a railroad track walker and his wife. And the track walker said to him: "Oh, come on now, we are Russians. Just sit there and don't give yourself away." They went off. But the fugitive didn't believe them; they were, after all, Soviet people, they had to denounce him. And he crawled off into the woods. From the edge of the forest he watched and saw the track walker return, bringing clothing and food. That evening the fugitive walked along the track and at a forest whistle stop boarded a freight train, jumping off before morning and going into the forest for the day. Night after night he moved on in this way, and when he grew stronger, he even got off at every stop, hiding in the foliage or walking on ahead, getting in front of the train, and then jumping on it again while it was moving. That way he risked dozens of times losing an arm, a leg, his head. (That was how he paid for the few easy glides of the pen of the stoolie who had turned him in.) But on one occasion, just before reaching the Urals, he changed his rule and went to sleep on a flatcar carrying logs. He was wakened by a kick and a lantern shining in his eyes and a demand for "Documents!" "Just a minute!" He rose and with one blow knocked the guard off the car and jumped off the other side—and onto the head of *another* guard! He knocked that one off his feet and managed to make his getaway under the nearby trains. Outside the station he boarded a train while it was moving. He decided to bypass

Sverdlovsk by walking around it, and in the suburbs plundered a trade stall, got clothes for himself, put three suits on, and collected some food. At one station he sold one of the suits and bought a ticket from Chelyabinsk to Orsk and Central Asia. No, he knew where he was going—to Vienna! But he had to cover his tracks and let the pursuit die down. A Turkmen, chairman of a collective farm, met him at the bazaar, took him to work on the farm even though he had no documents. And his hands justified his calling as a mechanical engineer. He repaired all the farm machinery. After several months he took his pay and went to Krasnovodsk, near the border. After the train left Mary, a patrol came along, checking documents. At this point, our mechanical engineer went out on the car platform, opened the door, hung onto the toilet window, where they could not see him from inside because of the frosted glass, and only the toe of one shoe remained to support him and enable him to get back on the step. The patrol failed to notice the toe of a shoe in the corner of the door frame and went on into the next car. And so the awful moment passed. Having crossed the Caspian Sea without incident, the fugitive got on a train going from Baku to Shepetovka, and from there he made for the Carpathians. With great caution he started to make his way across the mountainous border at a remote, steep, forested place—but still the border guards caught him! How much had he had to sacrifice, to suffer, to invent, and to endure since his Siberian camp, since that first felled pine tree—and right at the very end everything was wrecked in one instant! . . . And his strength left him, just as it had back there in the haystack at Taishet, and he couldn't resist any longer, nor lie, and in a final fury he merely shouted: "All right, take me, you executioners! Take me, you are stronger!" "Who are you?" "A fugitive! From the camps! Take me!" But the border guards acted rather strangely: They blindfolded him, took him into a dugout, and there unbound his eyes —and questioned him again—and suddenly it emerged that they were friends: Banderists, Ukrainian nationalist partisans! (Fie, fie! educated readers will frown and wave their hands at me: "Well, you certainly picked some character—he regarded the Banderists as friends! A real rotten fruit, that one!" Well, all I can do is spread my hands myself: That's how he was. That's how he was when he escaped. That's what the camps had made

of him. These camp people, as I can tell you, live on the basis of the swinish principle "Existence determines consciousness." Not by what the newspapers say. To camp inmates, friends are those with whom they were tormented in camp. And enemies are those who put the dogs on their trail. Lack of conscientiousness!) And so they embraced! The Banderists still had their own border crossings at that time, and they gently led him across.

And so there he was in Vienna again! But this time in the American zone. And submissive still to that enticing materialist principle, and not forgetting for one moment his bloody death camp, he no longer sought work as a mechanical engineer but, instead, went to the American authorities to unburden his soul. And he began to work for them in some capacity.

But! It is a human trait to relax one's vigilance as soon as the danger is past. He planned to send some money to his parents in Odessa, and to do that he had to exchange dollars for Soviet money. Some Jewish businessman invited him to his apartment in the Soviet zone of Vienna to make the deal. People used to shuttle back and forth all the time, paying no attention to the zones, but he should never have gone into the Soviet zone! He went, however—and was captured at the apartment of the money-changer.

Now this is a very Russian story of how superhuman feats are strung on and on and then thrown away for a glass of vodka.

Sentenced to death and in a cell of the Soviet prison in Berlin, he told the whole story to another officer and engineer—Anikin. This Anikin had himself been both in a German POW camp and on the verge of death in Buchenwald—and had been freed by the Americans, taken to the Soviet zone of Germany, and left there temporarily to assist in dismantling factories, and had run off to West Germany, and was engaged in building a hydroelectric power station near Munich, when he was kidnaped by the Soviet intelligence service (he was blinded with headlights and pushed into an automobile). And what was it all for? So that he could hear the story of the Odessa mechanical engineer and preserve it for us? So as to attempt fruitlessly to escape from Ekibastuz twice (about which there will be more in Part V)? And then be killed in the penalty lime factory?

Now that is predestination! Those are the twists of fate! And how can we then discern the meaning of one individual human life? . . .

We have not yet described the group escapes, and there were many of them too. They say that in 1956 a whole small camp escaped near Monchegorsk.

The history of all the escapes from the Archipelago would be a list too long to be read, too long to be leafed through. And any one person who wrote a book solely about escapes, to spare his reader and himself, would be forced to omit hundreds of cases.

Chapter 15

■

Punishments

Among the many joyous renunciations brought us by the new world were the renunciation of exploitation, the renunciation of colonies, the renunciation of obligatory military service, the renunciation of secret diplomacy, secret assignments and transfers, the renunciation of secret police, the renunciation of "divine law," and many, many other fairy-tale renunciations in addition. But not, to be sure, a renunciation of prisons. (They didn't break down the walls, but merely inserted a "new class content" inside them.) However, there was an unqualified renunciation of *punishment blocks*—that pitiless torture which could have been conceived only by the hate-filled minds of bourgeois prison keepers. The Corrective Labor Code of 1924 did allow, it is true, the isolation in a separate cell of especially troublesome prisoners, but it warned: This separate cell must in no wise resemble a punishment cell; it must be dry, well lit, and provided with the appurtenances for sleeping.

At that point it must have seemed ridiculous not only to the prison keepers but to the prisoners themselves that for some reason or other there was no punishment cell, that it should have been banned.

The Corrective Labor Code of 1933, which "was in effect" (i.e., not in effect) until the beginning of the sixties, turned out to be even more humane: it forbade even isolation in a separate cell!

But this was not because the times had become more complaisant but because other gradations of intracamp punishment

had by this time been mastered and adopted by following the path of experiment. In them it was not loneliness but the collective that drove you mad, and on top of that those who were being punished had to *bend their backs:*

- Strict Regimen Companies ("RUR's"), which were subsequently replaced by
- Strict Regimen Barracks ("BUR's"), which were Penalty Work Brigades, and
- Strict Regimen Camp Compounds ("ZUR's"), penalty compounds.

And sometime later and somehow unnoticed they added—not punishment cells, oh, no! but—

- Penalty Isolators—*"ShIzo's"*

For if you didn't intimidate the prisoner, if there was no further punishment you could apply—how could he be compelled to submit to the regimen?

And where could you put the captured fugitives?

What was the ShIzo given for? For whatever they felt like: You didn't please your chief; you didn't say hello the way you should have; you didn't get up on time; you didn't go to bed on time; you were late for roll call; you took the wrong path; you were wrongly dressed; you smoked where it was forbidden; you kept extra things in your barracks—take a day, three, five. You failed to fulfill the work norm, you were caught with a broad —take five, seven, or ten. And for *work shirkers* there was even fifteen days. And even though, according to the law (what law?), fifteen days was the maximum in penalty cells (though according to the Corrective Labor Code of 1933 even that was impermissible!), this accordion could be stretched out to a whole year. In 1932 in Dmitlag (this is something Averbakh writes about —black on white!) they used to give *one year* of ShIzo for *self-mutilation!* And if one bears in mind that they used to refuse treatment in such cases, then this meant they used to put a sick, wounded person in a punishment cell to rot—for a whole year!

What was required of a ShIzo? It had to be: (a) cold; (b) damp; (c) dark; (d) for starvation. Therefore there was no heat.

(Lipai: not even when the temperature outside was 22 degrees below zero Fahrenheit.) They did not replace missing glass panes in the winter. They allowed the walls to get damp. (Or else they put the penalty-block cellar in moist ground.) The windows were microscopic or else there were none at all (more usual). They fed a *"Stalin" ration* of ten and a half ounces a day and issued a "hot" meal, consisting of thin gruel, only on the third, sixth, and ninth days of your imprisonment there. But at Vorkuta-Vom they gave only seven ounces of bread, and a piece of *raw* fish in place of a *hot* dish on the third day. This is the framework in which one has to imagine all the penalty cells.

It is very naïve to think that a penalty cell has of necessity to be like a cell—with a roof, door, and lock. Not at all! At Kuranakh-Sala, at a temperature of minus 58 degrees Fahrenheit, the punishment cell was a sodden frame of logs. (The free physician Andreyev said: "I, as a *physician,* declare it *possible* to put a prisoner in that kind of punishment cell.") Let us leap the entire Archipelago: at that same Vorkuta-Vom in 1937, the punishment cell for work shirkers was a log frame *without a roof.* And in addition there was *a plain hole in the ground.* Arnold Rappoport lived in a hole like that (to get shelter from the rain they used to pull some kind of rag over themselves), like Diogenes in a barrel. Here is how they were fed: The jailer came out of the gatehouse hut with the bread rations and called to the men inside the log frame: "Come out and get your rations!" But no sooner did they stick their heads out of the log frame than the guard on the watchtower aimed his rifle: "Stop. I'll shoot!" And the jailer acted astonished: "What, you don't want your bread? Well, then, I'll leave." And he simply hurled the bread and fish down into the pit in the rain-soaked clay.

In the Mariinsk Camp (as in many others, of course) there was snow on the walls of the punishment cell—and in such-and-such a punishment cell the prisoners were not allowed to keep their camp clothes on but were forced *to undress to their underwear.* Every half-hour the jailer would let down the food shelf in the door and advise I. V. Shved: "Hey, you won't last, you'll die! You would do better to go out logging!" And Shved decided he was right, that he would have the sheet pulled over his face more quickly if he stayed! He went out into the woods. Out of twelve and a half years in the camps Shved spent a total of 148

days in punishment cells. He had been punished for everything one could imagine! For refusing to be an orderly in *India* (the hoodlums' barracks) he got six months in a penalty camp. For refusing to allow himself to be transferred from a well-fed agricultural work party to logging—he was sentenced a second time for economic counterrevolution, 58-14, and got another ten years. Any thief not wanting to go to a penalty camp could strike the convoy chief, knock his revolver out of his hands, and he would be sent nowhere. The peaceful political prisoner, however, had no way out—he would have his head forced down between his legs. In the Kolyma in 1938 the punishment cells for the thieves were heated, unlike those for the 58's.

The "BUR's"—the Strict Regimen Barracks—were intended for longer imprisonments. Prisoners were kept there for a month or three months, for a half-year or a year, or without any limit to their term, simply because they were considered dangerous. Once you got yourself on the black list you would be pushed into the BUR at the first opportunity—every May Day and every November holiday, whenever there was an escape or any other unusual camp happening.

The BUR could be the most ordinary kind of barracks, set apart and fenced off by barbed wire, with the prisoners in it being taken out daily to the hardest and most unpleasant work in the camp. It could also be a masonry prison inside the camp with a full prison system—with beatings of prisoners summoned one by one to the jailers' quarters (a favorite method that didn't leave marks was to beat with a felt boot with a brick inside it); with bolts, bars, locks, and peepholes on every door; with concrete floors to the cells and an additional separate punishment cell for BUR inmates.

This was exactly what the Ekibastuz BUR was like (although they had the first type there as well). The prisoners confined in it were kept in cells without sleeping shelves. (They slept on the floor on padded jackets and pea jackets.) A "muzzle" made of sheet iron completely covered the tiny little window below the ceiling. There were nail holes in it, but in the winter the snow covered even these, and it became totally dark in the cell. The electric light was not turned on during the day, which meant that day was darker than night. There was never any ventilation of

the cell. For *half a year*—in 1950—the prisoners were not taken on even one fresh-air walk. And so this BUR was very like a fierce prison, and it was hard to see what it had to do with a camp. The prisoners had to urinate inside their cell instead of being taken out to a toilet. The hauling out of the big latrine barrel was considered a privilege by the cell orderlies because it meant a chance to gulp down some fresh air. And a bath . . . was a holiday for everyone. The cell was tightly packed. There was room only to lie down but not to stretch your legs. And this —for half a year. The gruel was water, there were twenty-one ounces of bread and not a crumb of tobacco. If anyone got a parcel from home while he was in the BUR, anything in it which would spoil was "written off" (the administration grabbed it off or else sold it cheap to the trusties). And the rest was put into the storage room to be kept for many, many months. (Whenever such special-regimen prisoners were taken out to work again, they would get a move on to avoid being locked up again.)

Sometimes in this suffocation and immobility the prisoners just couldn't stand it any longer—particularly those being assimilated to the thieves' law who were nervous and self-assertive. (Thieves who got into Ekibastuz were also considered 58's and had no special privileges.) The most popular dodge of the BUR prisoners was to swallow the aluminum tablespoon provided for lunch. Everyone who did this was X-rayed. And only when it had been determined that he was not lying, that he really had a spoon inside him, did they put him in the hospital and cut open his stomach. Lyoshka Karnoukhy repeated this spoon-swallowing caper three times and there was nothing left of his stomach. Kolka Salopayev *played insane:* he hanged himself one night, but the other lads there "saw" him by agreement, tore down the noose, and he was taken to the hospital. Someone else contaminated a thread by pulling it between his teeth and then inserted it with a needle under the skin on his leg. Infection! Hospital! He didn't care whether it was gangrene or not—anything to get out of there.

But the convenience of also getting some work out of the punished prisoners compelled the bosses to set them apart in individual penalty compounds—the "ZUR's." In the "ZUR's," in the first place, the food was worse. For months at a time

might be no second course, and the bread ration was reduced. In the bath even in winter there was a broken window, and the women barbers in their padded cotton trousers and padded jackets used to crop the naked prisoners. There might be no mess hall, but they didn't hand out the gruel in the barracks either—you had to go to the kitchen to get it and carry it to the barracks through the frost and eat it there cold. The prisoners died in droves, and the clinic was filled with the dying.

The mere enumeration of penalty compounds will someday constitute an historical investigation of its own, the more so because it will not be easy to carry out. Everything is being erased.

Here is the kind of work they assigned the penalty compounds: harvesting hay twenty miles away from the camp compound, where the prisoners would be quartered in shacks made of hay and had to scythe in swamps with their feet always in water. (When they had friendly guards, they could gather berries while they were at work; vigilant guards would shoot to kill, but they picked berries anyway. They so wanted to eat!) Or laying up silage in the same swampy places amid clouds of mosquitoes and without any protection from them. (Your face and neck were eaten up, covered with scabs, and your eyelids were swollen—a man almost went blind.) Or they might be sent to dig peat in the basin of the Vychegda River; in the winter, they had to open up the frozen strata of silt with a heavy sledge hammer and remove them, take the partly thawed peat from beneath them, and then haul it half a mile uphill on sledges, doing the pulling themselves. (The camp used to look after its horses.) Or they might be sent to work at ordinary earth-moving—in the "earth-moving camp" near Vorkuta, for instance. And then, too, there was the favorite penalty work—the lime quarry and the calcining of lime. And the stone quarries. There is no room to list everything. All the heaviest of the heavy jobs, all the most unbearable of the unbearable jobs—that was penalty labor. And every camp had its own.

The favored candidates for the penalty compounds were: religious believers, stubborn prisoners, and thieves. (Yes, thieves! Here the great system of indoctrination broke down because of the inconsistency of the local instructors.) They kept whole barracks of "nuns" there who had refused to work for the devil. (At

the penalty camp for prisoners under convoy at the Pechora State Farm they held them in a penalty block up to their knees in water. In the autumn of 1941 they gave them all 58-14—economic counterrevolution—and shot them.) They sent the priest Father Viktor Shipovalnikov there on charges of conducting "religious propaganda" (he had celebrated vespers for five nurses on Easter Eve). They sent impudent engineers and other brazen intellectuals there. They sent fugitives who had been caught. And also, with sad hearts, they sent *socially friendly* elements who simply refused to assimilate the proletarian ideology. (Because of the complex mental task of classification, we will not reproach the administration for its sometimes unwitting confusion: From Karabas, for example, they sent two cartloads of religious women to the children's colony to look after the camp children there, and at the same time sent some women thieves and syphilitics to the Dolinka penalty sector, Konspai. But they got muddled over whose things to put on which cart, and the syphilitic women thieves were sent to look after the children and the "nuns" to the penalty sector. They later realized what had happened, but left them where they were.)

And often prisoners were sent to penalty compounds for refusal to become informers. The majority died there and naturally cannot speak about themselves. And the murderers from State Security are even less likely to speak of them. The soil scientist Grigoryev was sent to a penalty zone for that, but he survived. Also the editor of the Estonian agricultural magazine, Elmar Nugis.

There were stories of women in this context too. It is impossible to reach a sufficiently balanced judgment on these stories because some intimate element always remains hidden from us. However, here is the story of Irena Nagel as she told it herself. She worked as a typist for the Administrative Section of the Ukhta State Farm, in other words as a very comfortably established trusty. Heavy-set and imposing, she wore her hair in long braids wrapped around her head; and partly for convenience she went around in wide Oriental-type trousers and a jacket cut like a ski jacket. Whoever knows camp life will understand what an enticement this was. A security officer, Junior Lieutenant Sidorenko, expressed a desire to get more intimately acquainted. And Nagel replied: "I would rather be kissed by the lowliest thief in

camp! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. I can hear your baby crying in the next room." Repulsed by her outburst, the security officer suddenly changed his expression and said: "Surely you don't really think I like you? I merely wanted *to put you to the test.* So here's the way it is: you must *collaborate* with us." She refused and was sent to a penalty camp.

Here are Nagel's impressions of the first night she spent there. In the women's barracks there were "nuns" and women thieves.[1] Five girls were walking about wrapped in sheets. Playing cards the day before, the women thieves had gambled and lost the girls' clothes and so had ordered them to take them off and turn them over. Suddenly a band of men thieves came in with a guitar —in underpants and felt hats. They sang their thieves' songs like some sort of serenade. All at once some other men thieves ran in in a rage, grabbed one of their own wenches, threw her on the floor, beat her with a bench, and trampled her. She screamed, but then couldn't scream any more and stopped. No one interfered and everyone just sat there and acted as if they didn't notice what was going on. Later the medical assistant came in. "Who beat you up?" "I fell off the bunk," answered the beaten-up girl. At cards that same evening they also "lost" Nagel, but she was saved by the *bitch* Vaska the Crooked: he squealed to the chief and the chief took Nagel to spend the night at the gatehouse.

The penalty work parties (like Parma Nyroblag, in the depths of the taiga) were also often regarded as penalty assignments both for enlisted men in the guards and for officers, and offenders were also sent there; even more often, however, they substituted trusty guards.

If there was no law and no justice in the ordinary camps, then all the more don't look for them in the penalty camps. The thieves played their dirty tricks just as they pleased and went around openly with knives. (The Vorkuta "Earth-Moving" Camp, in 1946.) And the jailers hid from the thieves outside the camp compound, and this was at a time when the 58's still constituted a majority.

At the penalty camp of Dzhantui near Pechora the thieves burned down two barracks out of mischief, stopped the cooking,

1. Who else in all world history ever equated them? What kind of person do you have to be to mix them together?

drove away the cooks, and cut the throats of two officers. The remaining officers there, even under threat of being demoted to the ranks, refused to enter the camp compound.

In cases like this, the chiefs saved themselves by resorting to the maxim "Divide and conquer"; they appointed as commandant of Dzhantui a *bitch* urgently brought in with his assistants from somewhere else. The very first night he and his gang knifed three thieves and things began to quiet down a little.

It takes a thief to catch a thief, as the proverb had long since foreseen. The fathers of the Archipelago, having, in accordance with the Progressive Doctrine, multiplied these socially friendly elements beyond all rhyme and reason, to the point where they themselves were being choked, could find no other way out of the situation than to split them up and sic them on each other in knife battles. (The war between the thieves and the bitches which shook the Archipelago in the postwar years.)

Of course, despite all their apparent bravado, the thieves themselves also had a hard time in penalty situations. This kind of debauchery was their way of trying to break out somehow. As with all parasites, it was more advantageous for them to live among those they could suck on. Sometimes the thieves cut off their fingers so as not to have to go on penalty work, as, for example, at the celebrated Vorkuta Lime Factory. (Certain recidivists in the postwar period actually had inscribed in their sentence: "To be confined at the Vorkuta Lime Factory." The screws were being turned from on high.)

There everyone went around with knives. The bitches and the thieves cut each other up every day. The cook—a bitch—served as he pleased: some got it thick, some got it thin, and some merely got a whack on the head with the ladle. The work assigner went about with an iron reinforcing rod and killed men on the spot with one single, whistling blow. The bitches kept young boys for pederasty. There were three barracks: the barracks of the bitches, the barracks of the thieves, and the barracks of the "suckers," a hundred in each. The suckers . . . worked: down below, near the camp, was a limestone quarry where lime was extracted; then it was carried in hand barrows up a cliff, where it was poured into cones, leaving flues on the inside; the lime was roasted; they then had to spread out the burning lime amid smoke, soot, and lime powder.

In the Dzhida camps, the penalty sector of Bayangol was famous.

To Revuchi, the penalty camp of Kraslag, even before it had any penalty prisoners, they had sent a "working nucleus" of 150 strong sloggers who had not committed any infractions. It's all very well to talk about penalty labor, but the chiefs have to fulfill their plan regardless! So they simply condemned ordinary sloggers to the penalty camp! They even sent thieves and also long-termers under Section 58—*heavyweights*. And the thieves were scared of these *heavyweights* too, because they had twenty-five-year sentences, and in the postwar situation they could kill a thief without having their prison term extended, and it was no longer considered (as at the canals) a sally of the class enemy.

The working day at Revuchi was supposed to be eleven hours, but in fact, what with marching for three or four miles to the forest and back, it turned out to be fifteen hours altogether. Reveille was at 4:30 A.M., and they got back to the camp compound toward 8 P.M. The zeks quickly began to become *last-leggers*, and, as a result, there were work shirkers. Following the general line-up in the morning they lined these malingerers up in the club, and the work assigner went down the line and picked out some for a *workover*. These malingerers in rope sandals ("shod for the season," 76 degrees below zero Fahrenheit) and thin pea jackets were pushed outside the compound—and five police dogs were set on them there with orders to "Get 'em!" The dogs tore them, clawed them, and knocked them down. The dogs were then called off and a Chinese came up on a young bull harnessed to a honey wagon, loaded the malingerers into it, carried them off, and dumped the cart from the roadbed into a hollow below. Down there waiting was the brigadier Lyosha Sloboda, who beat the malingerers with a club until they got up and began to work for him. He credited their output to his own brigade, while they got only ten and a half ounces each—a penalty-block ration. (Whoever thought up that whole graduated system was a real little Stalin!)

Galina Iosifovna Serebryakova! Why don't you write *about that?* Why is it that your heroes, sitting there in camp, do nothing, work nowhere, and only talk about Lenin and Stalin?

It was virtually impossible for an ordinary slogger from the 58's to survive in such a penalty camp.

At the penalty work subparty of SevZhelDorlag (chief—Colonel Klyuchkin) there was cannibalism in 1946–1947: people were cut up into meat, cooked, and eaten.

This was on the heels of our people's earth-shaking, historic victory.

Ah, Colonel Klyuchkin! Where did you build yourself your retirement villa?

Chapter 16

■

The Socially Friendly

Let my feeble pen, too, join in praise of this tribe! They have been hailed as pirates, as freebooters, as tramps, as escaped convicts. They have been lauded as noble brigands—from Robin Hood on down to operetta heroes. And we have been assured that they have sensitive hearts, that they plunder the rich and share with the poor. Oh, exalted confreres of Karl Moor! Oh, rebellious, romantic Chelkash! Oh, Benya Krik! Oh, barefoot Odessa lads and Odessa troubadours!

And, indeed, has not all world literature glorified the thieves? It is not for us to reproach François Villon; but neither Hugo nor Balzac could avoid that path; and Pushkin, too, praised the thief principle in his Gypsies. (And what about Byron?) But never have they been so widely glorified and with such unanimity and so consistently as in Soviet literature. (For this there were lofty Theoretical Foundations, it wasn't only a matter of Gorky and Makarenko.) Leonid Utyosov howled nasally from the variety stage—and his delighted fans howled back in response. And it was in speech heavily influenced by the thieves' jargon that the Baltic and Black Sea "little brothers" of Vishnevsky and Pogodin spoke. And it was precisely this thieves' jargon that gave most of the expressiveness to their humor. Who was there who was not breathless with sacred emotion in describing the thieves to us—their vivid, unreined nihilism at the beginning, and their dialectical "reforging" at the end—starting with Mayakovsky (and, in his footsteps, Shostakovich with his ballet *The Young Lady and the Hooligan*) and including Leonov, Selvinsky,

Inber—and you could go on and on? The cult of the thieves proved to be infectious in an epoch in which literature was drying up for lack of positive heroes. Even a writer so far from the official Party line as Viktor Nekrasov could find no better model to exemplify Russian heroism than the thief Master Sergeant Chumak (*In the Trenches of Stalingrad*). Even Tatyana Yesenina (*Zhenya, the Miracle of the 20th Century*) gave in to that same kind of hypnosis and drew for us the "innocent" figure of Venka, Jack of Diamonds. Perhaps it was only Tendryakov, with his capacity for looking at the world with an unprejudiced eye, who first expressed for us without licking his chops the essence of the thief, showing his spiritual loathsomeness—in *Three, Seven, Ace*. Aldan-Semyonov is supposed to have been in camp himself, but in his "Bas-Relief on the Cliff" he has invented absolute nonsense: He has a thief, Sasha Aleksandrov, influenced by the Communist Petrakov, whom all the bandits allegedly respect because he knew Lenin and helped destroy Kolchak (a totally fictitious motivation dating from Averbakh's time), who is supposed to have assembled a work brigade from the last-leggers without living off them! (But *they did live off them!* As Aldan-Semyonov knows very well!) And this thief even made sure they were properly fed! And for this he even won from the free employees at cards! As if he didn't really need those winnings for the money to buy enough tea for *a trip*. And what a stupid mothballed anecdote for the sixties!

Once in 1946 on a summer evening in the minicamp at the Kaluga Gates in Moscow, a thief lay stomach-down on the windowsill of the third floor and in a loud voice began to sing one thieves' song after another. His songs carried easily over the gatehouse and barbed wire and could be heard out on the sidewalks of Bolshaya Kaluga Street, at the trolleybus stop there, and also in the nearby section of Neskuchny Park. These songs glorified the "easy life"—of murder, burglary, assault. And not only did none of the jailers, instructors, or guards on watch interfere with him, but it didn't even occur to anyone to shout at him. This propaganda of the thieves' views, it seemed, in no way contradicted the structure of our lives or threatened it. I sat there in the compound and thought: What would happen if at this moment I were to climb up to the third floor and from the same window in as loud a voice sang something about the fate of the Russian POW, such as "Where Are You, Where Are You?," a

song I had heard in counterintelligence headquarters at the front? Or what if I myself had composed something on the fate of the humiliated and trampled front-line soldier? What an uproar there would have been! How fast they would have come running! And right in all that hustle and bustle they would have run up the fire ladder to get me, not waiting until I was surrounded. They would have gagged me, tied my hands, and *pasted* a second *term* on me! Yet the thief went right on singing, and the free Muscovites listened—as if that were the most ordinary thing in the world.

Now, *historically*, as they never tire of saying in our country, this didn't happen all at once. In Old Russia there existed (just as there still exists in the West) an incorrect view of thieves as incorrigible, permanent criminals (a "nucleus of criminality"). Because of this the politicals were segregated from them on prisoner transports and in prisons. And also because of this the administration, as P. Yakubovich testifies, broke their licentiousness and their supremacy in the prisoners' world by forbidding them to occupy positions in the artels, income-producing positions, and by decisively taking the side of the other hard-labor prisoners. "Sakhalin swallowed them up by the thousands and never let them go." In Old Russia there was just one single formula to be applied to the criminal recidivists: "Make them bow their heads beneath the iron yoke of the law!" (Urusov.) And so it was that up to 1914 the thieves did not play the boss either in Russia as a whole or in Russian prisons.

But the shackles fell and freedom dawned. In the desertion of millions in 1917, and then in the Civil War, all human passions were largely unleashed, and those of the thieves most of all, and they no longer wished to bow their heads beneath the yoke; moreover, they were informed that they didn't have to. It was found both useful and amusing that they were enemies of private property and therefore a revolutionary force which had to be guided into the mainstream of the proletariat, yes, and this would constitute no special difficulty. An unprecedented multitude of newcomers also grew up to join them, consisting of the orphans of the Civil War and famine—homeless waifs or "besprizorniki,"* and hoodlums. They warmed themselves at asphalt caldrons during the New Economic Policy, and for their first lessons they learned to cut ladies' purses off their arms and lift suitcases

through train windows with hooks. Reasoning on a social basis: wasn't the *environment* to blame for everything? So let us re-educate these healthy lumpenproletarians and introduce them into the system of conscious life! And the first communes came into existence for this purpose, and the first children's colonies, and the motion picture *The Road to Life.** (But what they didn't notice was that the "besprizorniki" *were not full-blown thieves.* And the reforming of the "besprizorniki" did not say anything: they had not yet had time to be totally spoiled.)

And now, when more than forty years have gone by, one can look around and begin to have doubts: Who re-educated whom? Did the Chekists re-educate the thieves, or the thieves the Chekists? The urka—the habitual thief—who adopted the Chekist faith became a *bitch*, and his fellow thieves would cut his throat. The Chekist who acquired the psychology of the thief was an *energetic* interrogator of the thirties and forties, or else a *resolute* camp chief—such men were appreciated. They got the service promotions.

And the psychology of the urki was exceedingly simple and very easy to acquire:

1. I want to live and enjoy myself; and f—— the rest!
2. Whoever is the strongest is right!
3. If they aren't [beat]ing you, then don't lie down and ask for it.* (In other words: As long as they're beating up someone else, don't stick up for the ones being beaten. Wait your own turn.)

Beat up your submissive enemies one at a time! Somehow this is a very familiar law. It is what Hitler did. It is what Stalin did.

How much Sheinin has lisped into our ears about the "unique code" of the thieves, about the "honor" of their word. You read him and they all turn into Don Quixotes and patriots! But just wait till you meet those ugly mugs in a cell or a Black Maria. . . .

Come on now, stop lying, you mercenary pens! You who have observed the Russian thieves through a steamship rail or across an interrogator's desk! You who have never encountered the thieves when you were defenseless.

The thieves—the urki—are not Robin Hoods! When they want, they steal from last-leggers! When they want they are not

squeamish about—taking the last footcloths off a man freezing to death. Their great slogan is: "You today, me tomorrow!"

But perhaps they really are patriots? Why don't they steal from the state? Why don't they plunder the *special* country villas? Why don't they stop the long black limousines? Is it because they expect to encounter the conqueror of Kolchak there? No, it is because those automobiles and dachas are well defended. And because stores and warehouses are shielded by the law. Because the realist Stalin understood long ago that all this was just a big buzz—this re-education of the urki. And he redirected their energy, sicked them on the citizens of his own country.

Here is what our laws were like for thirty years—to 1947: For robbery of the state, embezzlement of state funds, a packing case from a warehouse, for three potatoes from a collective farm —ten years! (After 1947 it was as much as twenty!) But robbery of a *free person?* Suppose they cleaned out an apartment, carting off on a truck everything the family had acquired in a lifetime. If it was not accompanied by murder, then the sentence was *up to one year*, sometimes six months.

The thieves flourished because they were encouraged.

Through its laws the Stalinist power said to the thieves clearly: Do not steal from me! Steal from private persons! You see, private property is a belch from the past. (But "personally assigned" VIP property is the hope of the future. . . .)

And the thieves . . . understood. In their intrepid stories and songs, did they go to steal where it was difficult, dangerous, where they could lose their heads? No. Greedy cowards, they pushed their way in where they were encouraged to push their way in—they stripped the clothes from solitary passers-by and stole from unguarded apartments.

The twenties, the thirties, the forties, the fifties! Who does not remember that eternal threat hovering over the citizen: Don't go where it's dark! Don't come home late! Don't wear your watch! Don't carry money with you! Don't leave the apartment empty! Locks! Shutters! Dogs! (And nowadays those writers of satirical columns who weren't cleaned out at the time ridicule these loyal watchdogs. . . .)[1]

1. In the consistent struggle against the individuality of a man, first they deprived him of one friend—the horse, promising a tractor in its place. As if a horse were only draft power for a plow, and not, instead, your living

How many citizens who were robbed knew that the police didn't even bother to look for the criminals, didn't even set a case in motion, so as not to spoil their record of completed cases—why should they sweat to catch a thief if he would be given only six months, and then be given three months off for good behavior? And anyway, it wasn't certain that the bandits would even be tried when caught. After all, prosecutors[2] "lowered the crime rate"—something demanded of them at every conference—by the curious method of simply quashing cases, especially if they foresaw that there would be many defendants.

Finally, sentences were bound to be reduced, and of course for habitual criminals especially. Watch out there now, witness in the courtroom! They will all be back soon, and it'll be a knife in the back of anyone who gave testimony!

Therefore, if you see someone crawling through a window, or slitting a pocket, or your neighbor's suitcase being ripped open—shut your eyes! Walk by! You didn't see anything!

That's how the thieves have trained us—the thieves and our laws!

In September, 1955, the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (which delivers bold judgments on many matters—but not on literature) shed crocodile tears in a major article: At night on a Moscow street a man had been noisily battered to death beneath the windows of two families. It emerged later that both families (our! Soviet! families) were awake, looked out the window, but did not go to help: the wives did not allow their husbands to go. And one of the residents in the same house (maybe he, too, was wakened,

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friend in sorrow and happiness, a member of your family, part of your own heart! And soon afterward they began a persistent campaign against his second friend—the dog. Dogs had to be registered; they were hauled off to the skinners; and often special teams from the local soviets simply shot dead every dog they came across. And there were no hygienic or miserly economic reasons for this—the basis was much more profound: After all, a dog doesn't listen to the radio, doesn't read the papers; he is a citizen who is, so to speak, beyond the control of the state, a physically strong one, moreover, but his strength goes not to the state but to defend his master as *an individual*, without regard to any kind of decree that might be issued against him in the local soviet and any kind of warrant they might come to him with at night. In Bulgaria in 1960 the citizens were told, and not as a joke either, to fatten up . . . pigs *instead of* their dogs! Pigs don't have principles. They grow their meat for everyone who has a knife. However, the persecution of dogs never extended to those dogs who were useful to the state—the Security and guard dogs.

2. Like the prosecutor Golushko, *Izvestiya*, February 27, 1964.

but the article says nothing about that), a member of the Party since 1916, a retired colonel (evidently languishing without anything to do), had taken on himself the duty of public accuser. He was going around to editorial offices and courts demanding that those two families be charged with *abetting* a murder. And the journalist thundered also: This didn't come within the terms of the Criminal Code, but it was a disgrace! A disgrace!

Yes, it was a disgrace, but *for whom?* As always in our prejudiced press, everything was said in this essay except the main thing. That:

1. "The Voroshilov Amnesty" of March 27, 1953, seeking to win popularity with the people, flooded the whole country with a wave of murderers, bandits, and thieves, who had with great difficulty been rounded up after the war. (To pardon a thief is to kill a good man.)

2. In the Criminal Code of 1926 there was a most stupid Article 139—"on the limits of necessary self-defense"—according to which you had the right to unsheath your knife only after the criminal's knife was hovering over you. And you could stab him only after he had stabbed you. And otherwise *you* would be the one put on trial. (And there was no article in our legislation saying that the greater criminal was the one who attacked someone weaker than himself.) This fear of exceeding the measure of necessary self-defense led to total spinelessness as a national characteristic. A hoodlum once began to beat up the Red Army man Aleksandr Zakharov outside a club. Zakharov took out a folding penknife and killed the hoodlum. And for this he got . . . ten years for plain murder! "And what was I supposed to do?" he asked, astonished. Prosecutor Artsishevsky replied: "You should have fled!"

So tell me, *who* creates hoodlums?!

3. The state, in its Criminal Code, forbids citizens to have firearms or other weapons, but *does not itself undertake* to defend them! The state turns its citizens over to the power of the bandits —and then through the press dares to summon them to "social resistance" against these bandits. Resistance with *what?* With umbrellas? With rolling pins? First they multiplied the bandits and then, in order to resist them, began to assemble people's vigilantes (druzhina),* which by acting *outside the legislation* sometimes turned into the very same thing. But then, how could

they "have simply forced them to bow their heads beneath the yoke of the law" from the very beginning! The One-and-Only True Teaching again blocked the path.

So what would have happened if those wives had let their husbands go out, and if the husbands had run out with clubs? Either the bandits would have killed them too—which is more likely—or else they would have killed the bandits—and gone to prison for exceeding the limits of necessary self-defense. The retired colonel taking his dog out for its morning walk could in both cases have relished the consequences.

Any genuine initiative like that shown in the French film *The Waterfront at Dawn*, in which the workers went about catching thieves and punishing them themselves without the knowledge of the authorities, would in our country have been suppressed as illicit! Could one even *imagine* that way of thinking and that sort of film in our country?

But that is not all! There is one more important feature of our public life which helps thieves and bandits prosper—*fear of publicity*. Our newspapers are filled with reports on production victories which are a big bore to everyone, but you will find no reports of trials or crime in them. (After all, according to the Progressive Doctrine, criminal activity arises only from the presence of classes; we have no classes in our country, therefore there is no crime and therefore you cannot write about it in the press! We simply cannot afford to give the American newspapers evidence that we have not fallen behind the United States in criminal activity!) If there is a murder in the West, photographs of the criminal are plastered on the walls of buildings, they peer out at one from the counters of bars, the windows of streetcars, and the criminal feels himself a persecuted rat. If a brazen murder is committed here, the press is silent, there are no photographs, the murderer goes sixty miles away to another province and lives there in peace and quiet. And the Minister of Internal Affairs will not have to answer questions in parliament as to why the criminal has not been found; after all, no one knows about the case except the inhabitants of that little town. If they find him—well and good; if not—that is all right too. The murderer . . . hasn't violated the state border, so he isn't dangerous enough (to the state) to justify proclaiming a countrywide search for him.

It was the same with criminal activity as it was with malaria. It was simply announced one day that it no longer existed in our country, and from then on it became impossible to treat it or even to diagnose it.

Of course, both the police and the courts were inclined to *close cases*. But that led to formalities which played even more into the hands of the real murderers and bandits: they would accuse *anyone at all* of an unsolved case, whoever happened to be nearest at hand, and they were particularly fond of *hanging* several crimes on someone already guilty of one. It is worthwhile recalling here the case of Pyotr Kiziloy[3] who was twice, without any clues or evidence, sentenced to be shot (!) for a murder he had *not* committed. Or the case of Alekseyentsev,[4] which was similar. If lawyer Popov's letter about the Kizilov case had come not to *Izvestiya* but to the *Times*, it would have resulted in a change of the queen's judge or a government crisis. But in our country, four months later, the provincial Party committee (why the provincial Party committee—was the court subordinate to it?) met and, taking into consideration the "youth and lack of experience" of the investigator (why do they entrust people's fates to such people?) and his "participation in the War of the Fatherland" (for some reason they didn't take it into consideration with *us* in our time!), entered an official reprimand in one person's record and wagged a threatening finger at somebody else. And for using *torture* (this being already after the Twentieth Congress), the chief executioner Yakovenko was allegedly sentenced to three years a full half-year later, but since he was "one of our own" and was acting on instructions, carrying out orders from above—is it likely that he was actually compelled to serve his sentence? Such vindictiveness? But defense lawyer Popov, for example, had to be dealt with and driven out of Belgorod: He should learn the thieves', the countrywide, principle "If they're not [beat]ing you—then don't lie down and ask for it."

And so it is that anyone who speaks out on behalf of justice comes to repent thrice over, eight times over, that he ever did so. This is how the system of punishment is turned around so as to be an encouragement to thieves. And for decades they flourished like an unruly mold on our freedom, and in prisons and in camps.

3. *Izvestiya*, December 11, 1959, and April, 1960.
4. *Izvestiya*, January 30, 1960.

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And there is always that sanctifying lofty theory for everything. It was by no means the least significant of our literary figures who determined that the thieves were our allies in the building of Communism. This was set forth in textbooks on Soviet corrective-labor policy (there were such textbooks, they were published!), in dissertations and scientific essays on camp management, and in the most practical way of all—in the regulations on which the high-ranking camp officials were trained. All this flowed from the One-and-Only True Teaching, which explained all the iridescent life of humanity . . . in terms of the class struggle and it alone.

And here is how it was worked out. Professional criminals can in no sense be equated with capitalist elements (i.e., engineers, students, agronomists, and "nuns"), for the latter are steadfastly hostile to the dictatorship of the proletariat, while the former are only (!) politically unstable! (A professional murderer is *only* politically unstable!) The lumpenproletarian is not a property owner, and therefore cannot ally himself with the hostile-class elements, but will much more willingly ally himself with the proletariat (you just wait!). That is why in the official terminology of Gulag they are called *socially friendly* elements. (Tell me who your friends are . . .) That is why the regulations repeated over and over again: *Trust* the recidivist criminals! That is why through the Cultural and Educational Section a consistent effort was supposed to be made to explain to the thieves the unity of their class interests with those of all the workers, to indoctrinate them in a "suspicious and hostile attitude toward the 'kulaks' and counterrevolutionaries," and the authorities were to "*place their hopes* in these attitudes"! (Remember Averbakh: He taught you to steal! You never would have stolen on your own! And remember: Fan the class struggle in the camps.)

The "packed-up"[5] thief G. Minayev wrote me a letter in the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*:[6] "I was even proud that although a thief I

5. "Zavyazat"—"to knot up" (one's bag) = "to pack up"—was thieves' jargon for leaving the thieves' law with the consent of the underworld to join the life of the suckers.

6. November 29, 1962.

was not a traitor and betrayer. On every convenient occasion they tried to teach us thieves that we were not lost to our Motherland, that even if we were profligate sons, we were nonetheless sons. But there was no place for the 'Fascists' on this earth."

And the theory also held that it was necessary to study and make use of the *best traits* of the thieves. They loved romanticism? So "the orders of the camp chiefs must be enveloped in an aura of romanticism." They strove toward heroism? Give them the heroism of work! (If they would accept it . . .) They had an adventurous spirit? Give them the adventure of competition! (Those who know both the camps and the thieves find it hard to believe that all this was not written by imbeciles.) Were they conceited? Did they like to be the center of attention? Play up to their conceit with praise, with honors! Promote them into positions of leadership! Particularly the *ringleaders*, so as to employ their already established *authority* among the thieves for the purposes of the camp. (That is exactly what it says in Averbakh's monograph: the authority of the ringleaders!)

But when this elegant theory came down to earth in camps, here is what emerged from it: The most inveterate and hardened thieves were given unbridled power on the islands of the Archipelago, in camp districts, and in camps—power over the population of their own country, over the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, and the intelligentsia, power they had never before had in history, never in any state in all the world, power which they couldn't even dream of out in freedom. And now they were given all other people as slaves. What bandit would ever decline such power? The *central thieves*, the top-level thieves, totally controlled the camp districts. They lived in individual "cabins" or tents with their own temporary wives. (Or arbitrarily picking over the "smooth broads" from among their subjects, they had the intellectual women 58's and the girl students to vary their menu. In Norillag, Chavdarov heard a moll offer her thief husband: "Would you like me to treat you to a sixteen-year-old collective-farm girl?" This was a peasant girl who had been sent to the North for ten years because of one kilo of grain. The girl tried to resist, but the moll soon broke her will: "I'll cut you up! Do you think . . . I'm any worse than you? I lie under him!") And they had their own *lackeys* too—servants from among the sloggers who carried out their chamber pots. They had their food

prepared separately, using the little bit of meat and good fat issued for the common pot. The thieves who were one rank lower carried out the managerial tasks of the work assigners, the deputies for auxiliary services, and the commandants, and in the morning they used to stand in pairs, with clubs, at the exits from the tents for two and command: "Leave without the last one!" The lesser hoodlums were used to beat up the work shirkers—that is, those who no longer had the strength left to drag themselves to work. (The chief of Taimyr Peninsula used to drive up to the line-up in his sedan and admire the way the thieves beat up the 58's.) Lastly, the thieves who were able to "chirp"—in other words, to talk glibly—washed the dirt off their necks and were appointed *instructors.* They gave speeches, lectured the 58's on how to live, themselves lived on what they stole, and got time off sentence. On the Belomor Canal an ugly mug like that—an instructor from among the socially friendly—who understood nothing about the business of construction, could abrogate the construction orders of a socially hostile construction supervisor.

And this was not only a question of theory translated into practice, but also of the harmony of everyday life. It was better for the thieves that way. And it was quieter and easier for the chiefs that way: not to tire their arms (with beatings) or their throats, not to get involved in details, and even not to appear in the camp compound. And it was much better for the business of oppression; the thieves carried it out much more brazenly, much more brutally, and without the least fear of responsibility before the law.

But even in places where the thieves were not given such power, they were all, on the basis of this same class theory, very much favored. If the thieves left the camp compound, that was the biggest sacrifice that could be asked of them. At work they could lie about as much as they pleased, smoke, tell their stories (of victories, escapes, heroism), and warm themselves in the sun in summer and at the bonfire in winter. Their bonfires were never touched by the guards, but the bonfires of the 58's were scattered and stamped out. But the *cubes*—the cubic yards—of timber, earth, or coal were then stolen from the 58's.[7] And in addition

7. The custom of living off someone else's *cubage*—work output—is maintained by the thief after he is released too, even though at first glance this would contradict his adherence to socialism. In 1951 at Oimyakon (Ust-Nera), the

they even took thieves to the rallies of shock workers, which on the whole were rallies of the recidivists (Dmitlag, and the Belomor Canal).

Now here is one female thief—Beregovaya. (Illustration No. 38.) She got herself into the glorious chronicles of the Moscow-Volga Canal. She was the scourge of every jail she was ever in and raised hell in every police station. If she ever had a whim to do some work, she immediately destroyed whatever she had done. With her necklace of sentences she had been sent to Dmitlag in July, 1933. The chapter of legends continues: She went into the *India* barracks and, to her astonishment (and the only thing believable is that astonishment), heard no mother oaths and saw no card games. They were supposed to have explained to her that the thieves there enjoyed their work. And she *immediately* went off to the excavations and even began to work "well." (Read this to mean that they credited her with the cubic yards of other people—just look at that face!) And then comes the chapter of truth: In October (when it got cold) she went to the physician, and even though she was not ill she asked him (with a knife up her sleeve?) for several days off. The physician willingly agreed (he always had many places available!). And the work assigner was an old girl friend of Beregovaya named Polyakova, and on her own account she added two weeks of loafing by setting up fake workdays for her. (More cubic yards were stolen from the sloggers.) And right then and there, seeing the enviable life of a work assigner, Beregovaya decided she would like to become a *bitch* too. And that very day, when Polyakova wakened her to go out to line-up, Beregovaya declared she would not go out to dig dirt before she had exposed Polyakova's machinations with workdays, output, and rations. (She was not particularly held

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thief Krokhalyov was freed and took on a job as a coal miner at that same mine. He never even lifted a sledge, but the mine foreman recorded a record output for him—by stealing from the zeks. Krokhalyov received from eight to nine thousand rubles per month, and he brought the zeks a thousand rubles' worth of food *to bolt*, and they were glad enough of this and kept their mouths shut. In 1953 the brigadier, a prisoner, Milyuchikhin, tried to break up this system. The free thieves cut him up, and he was charged with robbery. He was tried and got a renewal of his twenty years.

Now this note should not be understood as an amendment of the Marxist thesis that the lumpenproletarian is not a property owner. Of course he isn't! Krokhalyov didn't use his eight thousand to build himself a private house; he lost them at cards, drank them, or spent them on the broads.

back by any feeling of gratitude!) She managed to get called in to see the security officer. (The thieves were not afraid of the security officers, because no second term threatened them, but just let some KR women try to avoid going out to work!) And right away she became a brigadier of the lagging men's brigade (evidently she had promised to kick in the teeth of these last-leggers), and then . . . a work assigner in Polyakova's place, and then . . . an instructor in the women's barracks. (This expert in oaths, this card shark, this thief!) And then . . . chief of a construction detachment. (She was already ordering engineers around.) And all the red bulletin boards of Dmitlag displayed this toothy *bitch* smiling there (see the picture) in a leather jacket and with a field pouch (filched from someone). Those hands of hers were skilled at beating men. The eyes are those of a witch. This woman was praised by Averbakh!

So easy were the paths of the thieves in camp: a bit of scandal, a bit of betrayal, and from there on beat and stomp.

People will object that it was only the *bitches* who accepted positions, while the "honest thieves" held to the thieves' law. But no matter how much I saw of one and the other, I never could see that one rabble was nobler than the other. The thieves knocked gold teeth out of Estonians' mouths with a poker. The thieves (in Kraslag, in 1941) drowned Lithuanians in the toilet for refusing to turn over a food parcel to them. The thieves used to plunder prisoners sentenced to death. Thieves would jokingly kill the first cellmate who came their way just to get a new interrogation and trial, and spend the winter in a warm place, or to get out of a hard camp into which they had fallen. So why mention such petty details as stripping the clothes or shoes from someone out in subzero temperatures? And why mention stolen rations?

No, you'll not get fruit from a stone, nor good from a thief.

The theoreticians of Gulag were indignant; the kulaks (in camp) didn't even regard the thieves as real people (thereby, so to speak, betraying their true bestial colors).

But how can you regard them as people if they tear your heart out of your body and suck on it? All their "romantic bravado" is the bravado of vampires.[8]

8. People in educated circles who have not themselves encountered thieves on their narrow path may object to such a merciless estimate of the thieves' world:

38. Beregovaya

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But enough! Let us say a word in defense of the thieves also. They had their own "original code" and their own original concept of honor. But it was not a question of their being patriots, as our bureaucrats and writers would have liked to have it, but of their being absolutely consistent materialists and consistent pirates. And even though the dictatorship of the proletariat was so assiduous in courting them, they did not respect it even for one minute.

This tribe came into this world . . . to *live!* And since they were destined to spend as much time in prison as in freedom, then they wanted to gather life's flowers in prison too; and what did they care about—the purpose for which the prison was planned or the suffering of others beside them there? They were unruly, and they enjoyed the fruits of that unruliness there—so why should they worry about the man who bowed his head and died a slave? They had to eat—so they took whatever they could see that was edible and tasty. They had to drink—so they sold the convoy guards the things they had taken from their neighbors for vodka. They had to sleep on something soft—and, despite their manly looks, it was considered quite honorable for them to carry their own pillow with them, as well as a padded blanket or feather quilt. (The more so because one could hide a knife in it very well.) They loved the rays of the beneficent sun, and if they couldn't take a trip to a Black Sea resort, they tanned themselves on the roofs of their construction projects, in the stone quarries, at the mine entrances. (Let someone stupider go down into the mines.) They

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Was it not a secret love of private property that motivated those whom the thieves so irked? I insist on my own expression: vampires sucking your heart. They defile absolutely everything that for us pertains to the natural sphere of humanity. But is it really so hopeless? After all, the thieves are not born with these traits. But where is the good side of their hearts? I don't know. Probably it has been killed and suppressed by the thieves' law in accordance with which the rest of us are not people. We have already written about the threshold of evildoing. Evidently, the thief who has absorbed the thieves' law has irreversibly crossed some moral threshold. People will also object: But you saw only the petty thieves. The important real thieves, the big shots of the thieves' world, were all shot in 1937. And, in truth, I did not see the thieves of the twenties. But I simply do not have imagination enough to picture them as moral beings.

had magnificent, well-fed muscles, bunched in rippling knots. They surrendered their bronze skin to tattooing and in this way gradually satisfied their artistic, their erotic, even their moral needs: on one another's chests, stomachs, and backs they could admire powerful eagles perched on cliffs or flying through the sky. Or *the big hammer*, the sun, with its rays shooting out in every direction; or women and men copulating; or the individual organs of their sexual enjoyment; and, all of a sudden, next to their hearts were Lenin or Stalin or perhaps both (and this meant exactly the same as the crucifix around a thief's neck). Sometimes they would laugh at a droll stoker hurling coal into their rear orifice, or a monkey engaged in masturbation. And they would read slogans on each other which, even if they were already familiar, they nonetheless dearly loved to repeat! "——— all the girls in the mouth!" And it sounded as triumphant as "I am King Assargodon!" Or else on a girl thief's stomach there might be: "I will die for a hot ———!" And even the modest and tiny moral on an arm, an arm which had already buried a dozen knives in somebody's ribs: "Remember your mother's words!" Or else: "I remember caresses. I remember my mother." (The thieves had a mother cult, a formality, however, which did not mean faithfulness to her teachings.)

In order to intensify their sensations in their swift-running lives they used to love taking drugs. The easiest drug to get was "anasha"—marijuana—from hemp. It was also known among them as *plantchik* and was rolled into a smoke. They even used to sing about it gratefully in their songs:

> Plantchik, plantchik, God's grass tall,
> Joy of pickpockets, one and all.*

Yes, they do not recognize the earthly institution of private property, and in this respect they really are hostile to the bourgeoisie and to those Communists who have dachas and automobiles. Everything they come across on life's path they take as their own (if it is not too dangerous). Even when they have a surfeit of everything, they reach out to grab what belongs to others because any unstolen article makes a thief sick at heart. They wear the clothes they have stolen while they have novelty, until they tire of them, and soon afterward lose them at cards. Card games that last for several nights on end give them their

most powerful sensations, and in this respect they have far outdone the Russian nobility of past eras. They can even gamble *an eye* for stakes (and tear out the loser's eye on the spot). And they can also play for *beneath themselves*—the stakes being the right to use the loser for perverted enjoyment. And when they lose, they declare a general *frisking* on a barge or in a barracks—until they find something else belonging to one of the suckers. And then the game goes on.

The thieves don't like to work, and why should they when they get food, drink, and clothing without it? Of course, this constitutes a barrier between them and the working class. (But does the working class love work that much either? Isn't it for the bitter money that the working class strains its sinews, having no other way to earn it?) Not only can the thieves not "be carried away by their enthusiasm for labor," but labor is repulsive to them, and they know how to express this dramatically. For example, if they are sent off on an agricultural work party and forced to leave the camp compound in order to rake up vetch and oats for forage, they don't simply sit down and rest, but they gather all the rakes and forks in a heap and set fire to them and then warm themselves at the bonfire. (Socially hostile foreman! Make a decision. . . .)

When they tried to compel them to fight for their Motherland, it was useless. Their Motherland is the whole earth. The conscripted thieves went off in transports singing their song as they swayed back and forth:

> Our cause is right!
> Our cause is left!
> Why is everyone on the lam?
> Why, why indeed?

And then they would steal something, get themselves arrested, and take a familiar prisoner transport back to prison in the rear. Even the surviving Trotskyites applied from camp to be allowed to serve at the front; the thieves did not make any such applications. But when the operational armies began to surge into Europe, and the smell of booty grew strong, they put on uniforms and went off to plunder at the heels of the army. (They jokingly called themselves "The Fifth Ukrainian Front.")

But—and in this, too, they were much more principled than the 58's—no Zhenka Zhogol or Vaska Kishkenyá, with rolled-

down boot tops, respectfully pronouncing that sacred word "thief," with a one-sided grimace, would ever be caught helping to *strengthen the prison*—digging in posts, stringing barbed wire, trenching the no-man's land at the camp perimeter, repairing the gatehouse, fixing the perimeter lighting. In this lay the thief's honor. Prison had been created as the enemy of his freedom—and he could not work for prison! (However, he did not run any risk of getting Article 58 for refusing to work, whereas the poor enemy of the people would immediately have had Counter-Revolutionary Sabotage hung on him. The thieves were bold and impudent because of their own impunity, for, as the saying goes: Whoever has been mauled by a bear is likely to be afraid of a stump.)

It was totally out of the question to see a thief with a newspaper. The thieves held firm to their belief that politics was twaddle, without relation to real life. Neither did they read books, or at least only very rarely. But they loved oral literature, and any storyteller who could endlessly *string out "novels"* for them after curfew would always be well fed out of their booty and held in esteem by them, as are all storytellers and singers among primitive peoples. These "novels" were a fanciful and rather monotonous amalgam of dime novels about life in high society (obligatorily high society!), peopled with titled viscounts, counts, and marquises, and with their own thieves' legends, their own self-magnification, their own thieves' jargon, and their thieves' concepts of the luxurious life which the hero always had to achieve in the end: the countess would lie down on his "cot," he would smoke only the very best "Kazbek," would own an "onion"—a watch—and his prokhorvá (his boots) would be shined to a high gloss.

Nikolai Pogodin was sent on an official visit to the Belomor Canal and probably used up no small amount of Soviet government money—yet he didn't see through the thieves, didn't understand them, and told lies about everything. Since in our literature nothing has been written about the camps for forty years except Pogodin's play—and the subsequent film—we have to comment on it.

The wretchedness of the KR engineers who stared into the mouths of their instructors and thereby learned how to live does not even require comment. But his *aristocrats*, his thieves, do. Pogodin even contrived not to notice in them their simple char-

acteristic of *robbing by the right of the strong*, not secretly like a pickpocket. He portrayed them all to a man as petty pickpockets, and more than a dozen times he points this up in the play to the point of nausea, and he has the thieves steal from the thieves (utter nonsense! they steal only from the suckers and turn everything over to their ringleader). Neither did Pogodin understand (or he did not wish to understand) the real stimuli of camp work—hunger, beatings, and the collective responsibility of the brigade. He did not even distinguish between the camp inmate who was a "comrade" and the one who was a "citizen." He latched on to only one thing: the "socially friendly" character of the thieves. (Which he was prompted to by the canal administration in Medvezhyegorsk, and even before that by Gorky in Moscow.) And he rushed to show the *"reforging"* of the thieves. And what came out was such an outrageous libel of the thieves that even I want to defend them against it.

They are much smarter than Pogodin shows them—or Sheinin either. And you couldn't buy them with some kind of cheap *reforging*, simply because their world outlook was closer to real life that that of the prison chiefs—it was more integrated and contained no elements of idealism whatever! Yet all those incantations to starving people to work and die at work—pure idealism. And if in speaking to a citizen chief or a correspondent from Moscow or at an absurd meeting, there appeared a tear in their eye and a tremor in their voice—that was because they were playing a well-calculated role aimed at getting them privileges or time off sentence. And inside himself meanwhile the thief was laughing the whole time! The thieves understood the joke very well indeed. (But the visiting writers from the capital didn't.) It was impossible for the *bitch* Mitya to enter the cell of a Strict Regimen Company unarmed, without a jailer, and for the local thief ringleader Kostya to crawl beneath the bunks to hide from him! Kostya, of course, had a knife ready, and if he hadn't, he would have hurled himself on Mitya to choke him, and one of the two would have been dead. Now that was no joke—just the opposite—but Pogodin creates a banal joke. The horrifying hypocrisy of the "re-education" of Sonya (why? what forced her to take up a wheelbarrow?) and through her Kostya too?! And the two thieves becoming guards? (The nonpolitical offenders could have done that, but not thieves!) And all that competition between brigades was quite out of the question for

the cynical, sober thieves—except maybe for the sake of laughs at the free workers. And the most irritatingly false note of all was the thieves' asking to be given the rules for creating a commune!

It would have been impossible to slander the thieves more or to make them more stupid! The thieves asking for *rules!* The thieves knew their *own* rules perfectly well—from the first robbery to the last knife blow in the neck. When you could beat a person who was down on the ground. And when five could attack one. And when they could attack a person who was sleeping. And for *their own* commune they had rules which predated the *Communist Manifesto.*

Their commune, more precisely their world, was a separate world within our world, and the strict laws which for centuries had existed in it for strengthening that world did not in any degree depend on our "suckers" legislation or even on the Party Congresses. They had their own laws of seniority, by which their ringleaders were not elected at all, yet when they entered a cell or a camp compound already wore their crown of power and were immediately recognized as chiefs. These ringleaders might have strong intellectual capacities, and always had a clear comprehension of the thieves' philosophy, as well as a sufficient number of murders and robberies behind them. The thieves had their own courts ("pravílki"), founded on the code of thieves' "honor" and tradition. The sentences of the court were merciless and were executed implacably, even if the condemned person was quite out of reach and in a completely different camp compound. (The types of punishment inflicted were unusual; they might all jump in turn from the upper bunks onto a convicted person lying on the floor and thus break his rib cage.)

And what did their word "frayersky"—"of the suckers"—mean? It meant what was universally human, what pertained to all normal people. And it was precisely this universally human world, *our* world, with its morals, customs, and mutual relationships, which was most hateful to the thieves, most subject to their ridicule, counterposed most sharply to their own antisocial, antipublic *kubla*—or clan.

No, it was not "re-education" which began to break the back of the thieves' world (the "re-education" merely helped them return faster to new robberies); it was when, in the fifties, brushing

off class theory and social friendliness, Stalin gave orders that the thieves be incarcerated in isolators, in solitary long-term cells, and even that new prisons be built for them (the "*shut-ups*," as the thieves called them).

In these "shut-ups," or isolators, the thieves swiftly wilted, sickened, and began to die. Because a parasite cannot live in isolation, by itself. It has to live *on somebody*, twining itself around the victim.

Chapter 17

■

The Kids

The Archipelago had many ugly mugs and many bared fangs. No matter what side you approached it from, there wasn't one you could admire. But perhaps the most abominable of all was that maw that swallowed up *the kids.*

The kids were not at all those besprizorniki or waifs in drab tatters who scurried hither and thither thieving and warming themselves at asphalt caldrons on the streets, without whom one could not picture the urban life of the twenties. The waifs were taken from the streets—not from their families—into the colonies for juvenile delinquents (there was one attached to the People's Commissariat of Education as early as 1920; it would be interesting to know, too, how things went with juvenile offenders before the Revolution), into workhouses for juveniles (which existed from 1921 to 1930 and had bars, bolts, and jailers, so that in the outworn bourgeois terminology they could have been called prisons), and also into the "Labor Communes of the OGPU" from 1924 on. They had been orphaned by the Civil War, by its famine, by social disorganization, the execution of their parents, or the death of the latter at the front, and at that time justice really did try to return these children to the mainstream of life, removing them from their street apprenticeship as thieves. Factory apprenticeship began in the labor communes. And this was a privileged situation in the context of those years of unemployment, and many of the lads there learned with a will. From 1930 on, for sentenced juveniles, Factory Apprenticeship Schools of a special type were created, under the People's Commissariat of

Justice. The young offenders had to work from four to six hours a day, for which they received wages on the basis of the All-Union Code of Labor Laws, and for the rest of their day they studied and played. And perhaps things might have been set to rights on this path.

But where did the young offenders come from? They came from Article 12 of the Criminal Code of 1926, which permitted children *from the age of twelve* to be sentenced for theft, assault, mutilation, and murder (Article 58 offenses were also included under this heading), but they had to be given moderate sentences, not "the whole works" like adults. Here was the first crawl hole into the Archipelago for the future "kids"—but it was not yet a wide gate.

We are not going to omit one interesting statistic: In 1927 prisoners aged sixteen (they didn't count the younger ones) to twenty-four represented 48 percent of all prisoners.[1]

What this amounts to is that nearly *half* the entire Archipelago in 1927 consisted of youths whom the October Revolution had caught between the ages of *six and fourteen.* Ten years after the victorious Revolution these same girls and boys turned up in prison and constituted half the prison population! This jibes poorly with the struggle against the vestiges of bourgeois consciousness which we inherited from the old society, but figures are figures. They demonstrate that the Archipelago never was short of young people.

But the question of *how* young was decided in 1935. In that year the Great Evildoer once more left his thumbprint on History's submissive clay. Among such deeds as the destruction of Leningrad and the destruction of his own Party, he did not overlook the children—the children whom he loved so well, whose Best Friend he was, and with whom he therefore had his photograph taken. Seeing no other way to bridle those insidious mischiefmakers, those washerwomen's brats, who were overrunning the country in thicker and thicker swarms and growing more and more brazen in their violations of socialist legality, he invented a gift for them: These children, from twelve years of age (by this time his beloved daughter was approaching that borderline, and he could see that age tangibly before his eyes), should

1. Vyshinsky, *op. cit.,* p. 333.

be sentenced *to the whole works* in the Code. In other words, "with the application of all measures of punishment," as the Decree of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of April 7, 1935, elucidated. (Including, that is, capital punishment as well.)

Illiterates that we were, we scrutinized decrees very little at the time. More and more we gazed at the portraits of Stalin with a black-haired little girl in his arms. . . . Even less did the twelve-year-olds read the decrees. And the decrees kept coming out, one after another. On December 10, 1940, the sentencing of juveniles from the age of twelve for "putting various objects on railroad tracks." (This was training young diversionists.) On May 31, 1941, it was decreed that for all other varieties of crime not included in Article 12 juveniles were to be given full sentences from the age of fourteen on!

But here a small obstacle arose: the War of the Fatherland began. But the law is the law! And on July 7, 1941—four days after Stalin's panicky speech in the days when German tanks were driving toward Leningrad, Smolensk, and Kiev—one more decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet was issued, and it is difficult now to say in what respect it is more interesting for us today—in its unwavering academic character, showing what important questions were being decided by the government in those flaming days, or in its actual contents. The situation was that the Prosecutor of the U.S.S.R. (Vyshinsky?) had complained to the Supreme Soviet about the Supreme Court (which means His Graciousness had heard about the matter), because the courts were applying the Decree of 1935 incorrectly and these brats were being sentenced only when they had *intentionally* committed crimes. But this was impermissible softness! And so right in the heat of war, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet elucidated: This interpretation does not correspond to the text of the law. It introduces limitations not provided for by the law! And in agreement with the prosecutor, the Presidium issued a clarification to the Supreme Court: Children must be sentenced and the full measure of punishment applied (in other words, "the whole works"), even in cases where crimes were committed not intentionally but as a result of *carelessness.*

Now that is something! Perhaps in all world history no one has yet approached such a radical solution of the problem of

children! From twelve years on for carelessness . . . up to and including execution![2] And that is when all the escape holes were shut off to the greedy mice! That is when, finally, all the collective-farm ears of grain were saved! And now the granaries were going to be filled to overflowing and life would flourish, and children who had been bad from birth would be set on the long path of correction.

And none of the Party prosecutors with children the same age shuddered! They found no problem in stamping the arrest warrants. And none of the Party judges shuddered either! With bright eyes they sentenced little children to three, five, eight, and ten years in general camps!

And for "shearing sheaves" these tykes got not less than eight years!

And for a pocketful of potatoes—one pocketful of potatoes in a child's trousers!—they also got eight years!

Cucumbers did not have so high a value put on them. For a dozen cucumbers Sasha Blokhin got five years.

And the hungry fourteen-year-old girl Lida, in the Chingirlau District Center of Kustanai Province, walked down the street picking up, mixed with the dust, a narrow trail of grain spilled from a truck (doomed to go to waste in any case). For this she was sentenced to only *three* years because of the alleviating circumstances that she had not taken socialist property directly from the field or from the barn. And perhaps what also inclined the judges to be less harsh was that in that same year of 1948 there had been a clarification of the Supreme Court to the effect that children need not be tried for theft which had the character of childish mischief (such as the petty theft of apples in an orchard). By analogy the court drew the conclusion here that it was possible to be just a wee bit less harsh. (But the conclusion we draw is that from 1935 to 1948 children *were* sentenced for taking apples.)

And a great many were sentenced for running away from Factory Apprenticeship Training. True, they got only six months for that. (In camp they were jokingly called *death-row prisoners.*

2. In March, 1972, all England was shocked when in Turkey a fourteen-year-old adolescent was sentenced to six years for dealing in *large* amounts of *narcotics*—how could it be??! And where were the hearts and eyes of your leftist leaders when they read the Stalinist laws on kids? (Footnote of 1972.)

But joke or no joke, here is a scene with some such "death-row prisoners" in a Far Eastern camp: They were assigned to dump the shit from latrines. There was a cart with two enormous wheels and an enormous barrel on it, full of stinking sludge. The "death-row prisoners" were hitched up, with many of them in the shafts and others pushing from the sides and from behind [the barrel kept swaying and splashing them]. And the crimson-cheeked *bitches* in their twill suits roared with laughter as they urged the children on with clubs. And on the prisoner transport ship from Vladivostok to Sakhalin in 1949, the *bitches used* these children at knifepoint for carnal enjoyment. So even six months was sometimes enough too.)

And it was then that the twelve-year-olds crossed the thresholds of the adult prison cells, were equated with adults as citizens possessing full rights, equated by virtue of the most savage prison terms, equated, in their whole unconscious life, by bread rations, bowls of gruel, their places on the sleeping shelves—that is when that old term of Communist re-education, "minors," somehow lost its significance, when the outlines of its meaning faded, became unclear—and Gulag itself gave birth to the ringing and impudent word "kids." And with a proud and bitter intonation these bitter citizens began to use this term to describe themselves—not yet citizens of the country but already citizens of the Archipelago.

So early and so strangely did their adulthood begin—with this step across the prison threshold!

And upon the twelve- and fourteen-year-old heads burst a life style that was too much for brave men who were experienced and mature. But the young people, by the laws of their young life, were not about to be flattened by this life style but, instead, grew into it and adapted to it. Just as new languages and new customs are learned without difficulty in childhood, so the juveniles adopted *on the run* both the language of the Archipelago—which was that of the thieves—and the philosophy of the Archipelago—and whose philosophy was that?

From this life they took for themselves all its most inhuman essence, all its poisonous rotten juice—and as readily as if it had been this liquid, and not milk, that they had sucked from their mothers' breasts in infancy.

They grew into camp life so swiftly—not in weeks even, but in days!—as if they were not in the least surprised by it, as if that

life were not completely new to them, but a natural continuation of their free life of yesterday.

Even out in freedom they hadn't grown up in linens and velvets; it had not been the children of secure and powerful parents who had gone out to clip stalks of grain, filled their pockets with potatoes, been late at the factory gate, or run away from Factory Apprenticeship Training. The kids were the children of workers. Out in freedom they had understood very well that life was built upon injustice. But out there things had not been laid out stark and bare to the last extremity; some of it was dressed up in decent clothing, some of it softened by a mother's kind word. In the Archipelago the kids saw the world as it is seen by quadrupeds: Only might makes right! Only the beast of prey has the right to live! That is how we, too, in our adult years saw the Archipelago, but we were capable of counterposing to it all our experience, our thoughts, our ideals, and everything that we had read to that very day. Children accepted the Archipelago with the divine impressionability of childhood. And in a few *days* children became beasts there! And the worst kind of beasts, with no ethical concepts whatever (looking into the calm and enormous eyes of a horse or caressing the flattened ears of a guilty dog, how can you deny that they have ethics?). The kid masters the truth: If other teeth are weaker than your own, then tear the piece away from them. It belongs to you!

There were two basic methods of maintaining kids in the Archipelago: in separate children's colonies (principally the younger kids, not yet fifteen) and in mixed-category camps, most often with invalids and women (the senior kids).

Both were equally successful in developing animal viciousness. And neither rescued the kids from being educated in the spirit of the thieves' ideals.

Take Yura Yermolov. He reports that when he was only twelve years old (in 1942) he saw a great deal of fraud, thievery, and speculation going on around him, and arrived at the following judgment about life: "*The only people* who do not steal and deceive *are those who are afraid to.* As for me—I don't want to be afraid of anything! Which means that I, too, will steal and deceive and live well." And yet for a time his life somehow developed differently. He became fascinated by the shining examples whose spirit he was taught in school. However, having got a taste of

the Beloved Father (and laureates and ministers tell us that this was beyond their capacities), at the age of fourteen he wrote a leaflet: "Down with Stalin! Hail Lenin!" They caught him on that one, beat him up, gave him 58-10, and imprisoned him with the kids and thieves. And Yura Yermolov quickly mastered the thieves' law. The spirit of his existence spiraled upward steeply —and at the age of fourteen he had executed his "negation of a negation": he had returned to the concept of thievery as the highest and the best of all existence.

And what did he see in the children's colony? "There was even more injustice than in freedom. The chiefs and the jailers lived off the state, shielded by the correctional system. Part of the kid's ration went from the kitchen into the bellies of the instructors. The kids were beaten with boots, kept in fear so that they would be silent and obedient." (Here it is necessary to explain that the ration of the youngest juveniles was not the ordinary camp ration. Though it sentenced kids to long years of imprisonment, the government did not cease to be humane. It did not forget that these same children were the future masters of Communism. Therefore they added milk and butter and real meat to their rations. So how could the *instructors* resist the temptation of dipping their ladle into the kids' pot? And how could they compel the kids to keep silent, except by beating them with boots? Perhaps one of these kids who grew up in this way will someday relate to us a story more dismal than *Oliver Twist?*)

The simplest reply to the overpowering injustices was to create injustices oneself! This was the easiest conclusion, and it would now become the rule of life of the kids for a long time to come (or even forever).

But here is what's interesting! In giving the cruel world battle, the kids didn't battle against one another! They didn't look on each other as enemies! They entered this struggle as *a collective*, a united group! Was this a budding socialism? The indoctrination of the instructors? Oh, come on, cut the cackle, big-mouths! This is a descent into the law of the thieves! After all, the thieves are united; after all, the thieves have their own discipline and their own ringleaders. And the juveniles were the apprentices of the thieves, they were mastering the precepts of their elders.

Oh, of course, they were intensely indoctrinated! Their instructors came—with three stars, four stars, on their shoulder

boards—and read them lectures on the Great War of the Fatherland, on the immortal feat of our people, on the Fascist atrocities, on the sunny Stalinist concern for children, on what a Soviet person should be. But the Great Teaching on Society, built on economics alone, knowing nothing of psychology, is ignorant even of that simple psychological law which says that the repetition of anything five and six times . . . already arouses disbelief, or even more than that—nausea. The kids were disgusted by whatever had been earlier rammed down their throats by their teachers and now by instructors who simultaneously stole from the kitchen. (And even the patriotic speech of an officer from a military unit —"Boys! You have been entrusted with the task of dismantling parachutes. This is valuable silk, the Motherland's property, try to take care of it!"—had no success. Rushing for overfulfillment of norms and to get extra dishes of cereal, the kids at Krivoshchekovo cut up all the silk into useless scraps.) And out of all the seeds sown among them, they took over only the seeds of hate —of hostility to the 58's and a feeling of superiority over the enemies of the people.

This was something that would come in handy later on, in the general camps. For the time being, however, there were no enemies of the people among them. Yura Yermolov was just the same kind of typical kid; he had long since exchanged the stupid political law for the wise thieves' law. No one could avoid being cooked up in that mash! No boy could remain a separate individual—he would be trampled, torn apart, ostracized, if he did not immediately declare himself a thieves' apprentice. And *all of them* took that inevitable oath. . . . (Reader! Put *your own* children in their place. . . .)

Who was the enemy of the kids in the children's colonies? The jailers and the instructors. The struggle was against them!

The kids knew their strength very well. The first element in their strength was unity, and the second impunity. It was only on the outside that they had been driven into here on the basis of the law for adults. But once in here, in the Archipelago, they were under the protection of a sacred taboo. "Milk, chief! Give us our milk!" they would howl, and beat on the door of the cell and break up their bunks and break all the glass in sight—all of which would have been termed armed rebellion or economic sabotage among adults. They had nothing to fear! Their milk would be brought them right away!

Or say they were marching a column of kids under armed guard through a city, and it seems even shameful to guard children so strictly. Far from it! They had worked out a plan. A whistle —and all who wanted to scattered in different directions! And what were the guards to do? Shoot? At whom? At children? . . . And so their prison terms came to an end. In one fell swoop 150 years ran away from the state. You don't enjoy looking silly? Then don't arrest children!

Our future novelist (the one who spent his childhood among the kids) will describe to us a multitude of kids' tricks—how they ran riot in the colonies, how they got back at and played nasty tricks on their instructors. Despite the seeming severity of the terms meted out to them and the camp regimen, the kids developed great insolence out of impunity.

Here is one of their boastful stories about themselves, which, knowing the typical pattern of the kids' actions, I fully believe. Some excited and frightened children ran to the nurse of a children's colony and summoned her to help one of their comrades who was seriously ill. Forgetting caution, she quickly accompanied them to their big cell for forty. And as soon as she was inside, the whole anthill went into action! Some of them barricaded the door and kept watch. Dozens of hands tore everything off her, all the clothes she had on, and toppled her over; and then some sat on her hands and on her legs; and then, everyone doing what he could and where, they raped her, kissed her, bit her. It was against orders to shoot them, and no one could rescue her until they themselves let her go, profaned and weeping.

In general, of course, interest in the female body begins early among boys, and in the kids' cells it was intensely heated up by colorful stories and boasting. And they never let a chance go by to let off steam. Here is an episode. In broad daylight in full view of everyone, four kids were sitting in the compound of Krivoshchekovo Camp No. 1, talking with a girl called Lyuba from the bookbinding shop. She retorted sharply to something they had said. The boys leaped up, grabbed her legs, and lifted them in the air. She was in a defenseless position; while she supported herself on the ground with her hands, her skirt fell over her head. The boys held her that way and caressed her with their free hands. And then they let her down—and not roughly either. Did she slap them? Did she run away from them? Not at all. She sat down just as before and continued the argument.

These were sixteen-year-old kids, and it was an adult camp, with mixed categories. (It was the same one that had the women's barracks for five hundred where all the copulation took place without curtains and which the kids used to enter importantly like men.)

In the children's colonies the kids worked for four hours and then were supposed to be in school for four. (But all that schooling was a fake.) When transferred to an adult camp, they had a ten-hour working day, except that their work norms were reduced, while their ration norms were the same as adults'. They were transferred at the age of sixteen, but their undernourishment and improper development in camp and before camp endowed them at that age with the appearance of small frail children. Their height was stunted, as were their minds and their interests. They were sometimes maintained in separate brigades depending on the kind of work they were doing, and sometimes they were mixed into a general brigade with elderly invalids. Here, too, "reduced physical labor" was required of them, or simply native child labor.

After the children's colony their situation changed drastically. No longer did they get the children's ration which so tempted the jailers—and therefore the latter ceased to be their principal enemy. Some old men appeared in their lives on whom they could try their strength. Women appeared on whom they could try their maturity. Some real live thieves appeared, fat-faced camp storm troopers, who willingly undertook their guidance both in world outlook and in training in thievery. To learn from them was tempting—and not to learn from them was impossible.

For a *free* reader does the word "thief" perhaps sound like a reproach? In that case he has understood nothing. This word is pronounced in the underworld in the same way that the word "knight" was pronounced among the nobility—and with even greater esteem, and not loudly but softly, like a sacred word. To become a worthy thief someday . . . was the kid's dream. This was the elemental motivating force of their companionship. Yes, for even the most independent among them,

For a young man, pondering life,

there was no destiny more reliable.

On one occasion, at the Ivanovo Transit Prison, I spent the

night in a cell for kids. In the next bunk to me was a thin boy just over fifteen—called Slava, I think. It appeared to me that he was going through the whole kid ritual somehow unwillingly, as if he were growing out of it or was weary of it. I thought to myself: This boy has not perished, and is more intelligent, and he will soon move away from the others. And we had a chat. The boy came from Kiev. One of his parents had died, and the other had abandoned him. Before the war, at the age of nine, Slava began to steal. He also stole "when our army came," and after the war, and, with a sad, thoughtful smile which was so old for fifteen, he explained to me that in the future, too, he intended to live only by thievery. "You know," he explained to me very reasonably, "that as a worker you can earn only bread and water. And my *childhood* was bad so I want to live well." "What did you do during the German occupation?" I asked, trying to fill in the two years he had bypassed without describing them—the two years of the occupation of Kiev. He shook his head. "Under the Germans I worked. What do you think—that I could have gone on stealing under the Germans? They shot you on the spot for that."

And in adult camps, too, the kids retained, as the principal characteristic of their conduct, their concerted action in attack and their concerted action in resistance. This made them strong and freed them from restrictions. In their consciousness there was no demarcation line between what was permissible and what was not permissible, and no concept whatever of good and evil. For them everything that they desired was good and everything that hindered them was bad. They acquired their brazen and insolent manner of behavior because it was the most advantageous form of conduct in the camp. And dissimulation and cunning served them very well in situations where strength could not carry the day. A kid could play the role of a boy saint. He could move you to tears. And all the while his comrades ransacked your bag behind your back. That rancorous company of theirs could wreak its vengeance on anyone at all—and just so as not to get mixed up with that horde, no one would come to the aid of their victim. When their purpose had been attained and their enemies divided, the kids would then hurl themselves in a pack on the single victim. And they were invincible! So many of them would attack at once that you couldn't even single them out,

distinguish them, remember them. And you simply did not have enough hands and feet to beat them off.

Here, as recounted by A. Y. Susi, are several pictures from Krivoshchekovo (Penalty) Camp No. 2 of Novosiblag. Life was lived in enormous half-dark dugouts (for five hundred each) which had been dug into the earth to a depth of five feet. The chiefs did not interfere with the life inside the compound—no slogans and no lectures. The thieves and kids held sway. Almost no one was taken out to work. Rations were correspondingly meager. On the other hand, there was a surplus of time.

One day they were bringing a breadbox from the bread-cutting room under the guard of brigade members. The kids started a fake fight in front of the box itself, started shoving one another, and tipped the box over. The brigade members hurled themselves on the bread ration to pick it up from the ground. Out of twenty rations they managed to save only fourteen. The "fighting" kids were nowhere to be seen.

The mess hall at this camp was a plank lean-to not adequate for the Siberian winter. The gruel and the bread ration had to be carried about 150 yards in the cold from the kitchen to the dugout. For the elderly invalids this was a dangerous and difficult operation. They pushed their bread ration far down inside their shirt and gripped their mess tin with freezing hands. But suddenly, with diabolical speed, two or three kids would attack from the side. They knocked one old man to the ground, six hands frisked him all over, and they made off like a whirlwind. His bread ration had been pilfered, his gruel spilled, his empty mess tin lay there on the ground, and the old man struggled to get to his knees. (And other zeks saw this—and hastily bypassed the dangerous spot, hurrying to carry their own bread rations to the dugout.) And the weaker their victim, the more merciless were the kids. They openly tore the bread ration from the hands of a very weak old man. The old man wept and implored them to give it back to him: "I am dying of starvation." "So you're going to kick the bucket soon anyway—what's the difference?" And the kids once decided to attack the invalids in the cold, empty building in front of the kitchen where there was always a mob of people. The gang would hurl their victim to the ground, sit on his hands, his legs, and his head, search his pockets, take his makhorka and his money, and then disappear.

The big strong Latvian Martinson was careless enough to appear in the compound wearing the high brown leather boots of an English aviator which were laced over hooks up to knee height. He wouldn't even take them off at night and was confident of his strength. But they ambushed him when he lay down for a brief nap on the rostrum in the mess hall. The gang swooped swiftly to the assault, and fled just as swiftly, and he was without his boots! All the laces had been cut and the boots jerked off. Look for them? But where? The boots would have been sent outside the compound immediately, through one of the jailers(!), and there sold for a high price. (And what didn't the kids "float" out of the compound to be sold! Each time the camp chiefs, taking pity on their youth, issued them even slightly better footgear or duds, or some flattened-out pads for mattresses that had been taken away from the 58's—in several days it would all have been traded to the free employees for makhorka, and the kids would once more be going around in tatters and sleeping on bare boards.)

It was enough for a careless free worker to go into the camp compound with a dog and turn his head for one second. And he could buy his dog's pelt that very same evening outside the camp compound: the dog would have been coaxed away, knifed, skinned, and cooked, all in a trice.

There is nothing finer than thievery and brigandage! They provide nourishment. They are jolly. But young bodies also need simple exercise, innocent enjoyment, and relaxation. If they were given hammers to nail shell boxes together, they would brandish them about incessantly and, with huge enjoyment (even the girls), hammer nails into anything that came to hand—tables, walls, tree stumps. They used to be constantly fighting with each other—not just to knock over a breadbox, but, really fighting, they would pursue each other over bunks and in the aisles. And it didn't matter that they were stepping on legs, on belongings, spilling things, soiling things, waking people up, hurting others. They were playing!

All children play like that, but for all ordinary children there are nonetheless parents (in our epoch, unfortunately, no more than "nonetheless"), and there is some controlling force over them, and they can be stopped, they can be reached, punished, sent away. But in camp all that was impossible. To get through

to the kids with words was simply impossible. Human speech was not for them. Their ears simply didn't admit anything that they themselves didn't need. If irritated old men started to grab them and pull them up short, the kids would hurl heavy objects at them. The kids found amusement in just about anything. They would grab the field shirt off an elderly invalid and play "Keep away"—forcing him to run back and forth just as if he were their own age. Does he become angry and leave? Then he will never see it again! They will have sold it outside the compound for a smoke! (And they will even come up to him afterward innocently: "Papasha! Give us a light! Oh, come on now, don't be angry. Why did you leave? Why didn't you stay and catch it?")

For adults, fathers and grandfathers, these boisterous games of the kids in the crowded conditions of camp could cause more anguish and be more hurtful than their robbing and their rapacious greed. It proved to be one of the most sensitive forms of humiliation for an elderly person to be made equal with a young whippersnapper—if only it were equal! But not to be turned over to the tyranny of the whippersnappers.

The kids' actions were unpremeditated, and they didn't mean to cause hurt or offense. They weren't pretending; *they simply did not consider anyone a human being* except themselves and the older thieves. That is how they came to perceive the world, and now they clung to that view. At the end of work they would break into a column of adult zeks who were utterly fagged out, hardly able to stand, sunk in a kind of trance or reverie. The kids would jostle the column, not because they had to be first—this meant nothing—but just for the fun of it. They used to talk noisily, constantly taking the name of Pushkin in vain. ("Pushkin took it!" "Pushkin ate it!") They used to direct obscene curses at God, Christ, and the Holy Virgin, and they would shout out all sorts of obscenity about sexual deviations and perversions, not even shamed by the presence of elderly women standing there—let alone the younger ones.

During their short camp stay they attained the peak, the summit, of freedom *from* society! During the periods of long roll calls in the camp compound the kids used to chase each other around, torpedoing the crowd, knocking people into one another. ("Well, peasant, why were you in the way?") Or they

would run around a person, one after the other, as they might around a tree—and the person was even more useful than a tree, because you could shield yourself with him, jerk him, make him totter, tug him in different directions.

This would have been hurtful even when you were feeling cheerful, but when your whole life was broken, when a man had been cast into the distant pit of a camp to die, when death from hunger already hung over you, and your vision was darkening—it was impossible to rise above yourself and have sympathy for the youngsters and the fact that they could play such carefree games in so dismal a place. No, the tormented elderly people were possessed with rage, and they used to shout at them: "Plague on you, little skunks!" "Scum!" "Mad dogs!" "Drop dead!" "I could strangle them with my own hands!" "Worse rats than the Fascists!" "They've sent them to kill us!" (And there was so much hatred in those shouts of the elderly invalids that if words could kill . . . they would have.) Yes! And it really seemed that the kids had been set on them intentionally! Because after prolonged thought the camp chiefs could never have invented a more cruel whip. (And, just as in a successful chess game all the combinations suddenly begin to mesh of themselves and it seems as if they had been brilliantly thought out beforehand, so, too, a great deal succeeded in our System to the end of wearing people down more effectively.) And it seems that the little devil imps of Christian mythology must have been just the same as these and in nowise different!

All the more so since their chief amusement—their constant symbol, their sign of greeting, and their threat—was the *slingshot*: the index and middle fingers of the hand parted in a "V" sign—like agile, butting horns. But they were not for "butting." They were . . . for gouging. Because they were aimed always at the eyes. This had been borrowed from the adult thieves and indicated a seriously meant threat: "I'll gouge out your eyes, you shit!" And among the kids, too, this was a favorite game: All of a sudden, like a snake's head, a "slingshot" rises out of nowhere in front of an old man's eyes, and the fingers move steadily toward the eyes! They are going to put them out! The old man recoils. He is pushed in the chest just a bit, and another kid has already knelt on the ground right behind his legs—and the old man falls backward, his head banging the ground, accompanied by the gay

laughter of the kids. And no one will ever help him up. And the kids don't even realize that they have done anything bad! It was merely fun! And you'd not catch those devils either, no way! And the old man, rising with difficulty, would whisper with rage: "If only I had a machine gun. I'd shoot them without pity!"

Old man T. nourished a burning hatred for them. He used to say: "Nothing good can come of them anyway. For human beings they are a plague. We have to annihilate them on the sly." And he worked out a means to this end: Whenever he succeeded in creeping up on a kid on the sly, he would hurl him to the ground and press down on the boy's chest with his knees until he could hear the ribs crack—but he didn't break them. He would let the kid up at that point. T. used to say that the kid wouldn't survive and that there wasn't a physician who could diagnose what was wrong with him. And by this means T. sent several kids to the next world before they themselves beat him to death.

Hate begets hate! The black water of hate flows easily and quickly along the horizontal. That was easier than for it to erupt upward through a crater—against those who condemned both the old and the young to a slave's fate.

That is how small stubborn Fascists were trained by the joint action of Stalinist legislation, a Gulag education, and the leaven of the thieves. It was impossible to invent a better method of brutalizing children! It was quite impossible to find a quicker, stronger way of implanting all the vices of camp in tiny, immature hearts.

Even when it would have cost nothing to soften the heart of a child, the camp bosses didn't permit it. This was not the goal of *their* training. At Krivoshchekovo Camp No. 1 a boy asked to be transferred so that he could be with his father in Camp No. 2. This was not permitted. (After all, the rules required families to be broken up.) And the boy had to hide in a barrel to get from one camp to the other and lived there with his father in secret. And in their confusion they assumed he had escaped and used a stick with spikes made of nails to poke about in the latrine pits, to see whether or not he had drowned there.

But it is only the beginning that is hard. For Volodya Snegiryov at fifteen it was somehow strange to be imprisoned. But later, in the course of six terms, he managed to collect nearly *a century* (including two terms of twenty-five years each). He spent hundreds of days in punishment blocks and prisons. (There his

young lungs acquired TB.) For seven years he was on the All-Union wanted list. After this he was well set, of course, on the true thieves' path. (Today he is a Group Two invalid—without one lung and five ribs.) Vitya Koptyayev has been imprisoned *continually* since the age of twelve. He has been sentenced *fourteen* times, nine of them for escaping. "I have never yet lived in freedom legitimately." Yura Yermolov got work after his release but was fired—because it was more important to give the job to a demobilized soldier. And he was forced "to go on tour," with the end result a new prison term.

Stalin's immortal laws on kids existed for twenty years—until the Decree of April 24, 1954, which relaxed them slightly: releasing those kids who had served more than one-third . . . of their *first* term! And what if there were fourteen? Twenty years, twenty harvests. And twenty different age groups had been maimed with crime and depravity.

So *who* dares cast a shadow on the memory of our Great Coryphaeus?

■

There were nimble children who managed to *catch* Article 58 very early in life. For example, Geli Pavlov got it at twelve (from 1943 to 1949 he was imprisoned in the colony in Zakovsk). For Article 58, in fact, *no minimum age* existed! That is what they said even in public lectures on jurisprudence—as, for example, in Tallinn in 1945. Dr. Usma knew a six-year-old boy imprisoned in a colony under 58. But that, evidently, is the record!

Sometimes the arrest of the child was put off for the sake of appearances, but took place later anyway. For example, Vera Inchik, the daughter of a charwoman, and two other girls, all aged fourteen, discovered (Yeisk, in 1932) that in the course of the liquidation of the "kulaks," little children were being thrown out to die. The girls ("like the revolutionaries earlier") decided to protest. They wrote out their protests in their own handwriting on sheets of paper taken from their school notebooks and posted them in the marketplace themselves, expecting immediate and universal indignation. A doctor's daughter, it would appear, was arrested immediately. But the daughter of the charwoman was only noted on a list. When 1937 came, she, too, was arrested—"for spying on behalf of Poland."

And where, if not in this chapter, are we going to mention the children orphaned by the arrest of their parents?

The children of the women of the religious commune near Khosta were fortunate. When their mothers were sent off to Solovki in 1929, the children were softheartedly left in their own homes and on their own farms. The children looked after the orchards and vegetable gardens themselves, milked their goats, assiduously studied at school, and sent their school grades to their parents on Solovki, together with assurances that they were prepared to suffer for God as their mothers had. (And, of course, the Party soon gave them this opportunity.)

Considering the instructions to "disunite" exiled children and their parents, how many of these kids must there have been even back in the twenties? (Remember that 48 percent.) And who will ever tell us of their fate? . . .

Here is . . . Galya Benediktova. Her father was a Petrograd typesetter, an Anarchist, and her mother was a seamstress from Poland. Galya remembers very well her sixth birthday in 1933. They celebrated it joyfully. The next morning she woke up—her father and mother were gone, and some stranger in uniform was messing about among their books. True, a month later her mother returned to her; the women and children were to travel to Tobolsk on their own, as free people; only the men went on a prisoner transport. They lived there as a family, but they had not managed to complete the three-year term before her mother was arrested again and her father was shot. Her mother died in prison a month later. And Galya was taken to an orphanage in a monastery near Tobolsk. Conditions there were such that the young girls lived in constant fear of violence. Then she was transferred to an orphanage in the city. The director talked to her like this: "You are the children of enemies of the people, and nonetheless you are being clothed and fed!" (No! How humane this dictatorship of the proletariat is!) Galya became like a wolf cub. At the age of eleven she was already given her first *political* interrogation. Subsequently she got a *ten-ruble bill*, although she did not serve it out in full. At the age of forty she lives a lonely life in the Arctic and writes: "My life came to an end with my father's arrest. I love him so much to this very day that I am afraid even to think about it. That was a whole different world, and my heart is sick with love for him. . . ."

And Svetlana Sedova also remembers: "I can never forget the

day they took all our things out into the street and sat me there on top of them, and a heavy rain was falling. From the age of six I have been 'the daughter of a traitor to the Motherland.' And there can be nothing more awful in life than this."

They were taken into NKVD foster homes, into *Special* homes. The majority had their surnames changed, particularly those who had famous names. (Yura Bukharin learned his real name only in 1956. But the Chebotaryov name was not, it seems, particularly famous?) The children grew up totally purged of their parents' disgrace. Rosa Kovacs, a native of Philadelphia, brought here as a small child by her Communist father, after leaving an NKVD foster home, found herself during the war in the American Zone of Germany—what fates befall people!—and what happened? She returned to the Soviet Motherland and got her twenty-five years.

Even a superficial glance reveals one characteristic: The children, too, were destined for imprisonment; they, too, in their turn would be sent off to the promised land of the Archipelago, sometimes even at the same time as their parents. Take the eighth-grader Nina Peregud. In November, 1941, they came to arrest her father. There was a search. Suddenly Nina remembered that inside the stove lay a crumpled but not yet burned humorous rhyme. And it might have just stayed there, but out of nervousness Nina decided to tear it up at once. She reached into the firebox, and the dozing policeman grabbed her. And this horrible sacrilege, in a schoolgirl's handwriting, was revealed to the eyes of the Chekists:

> The stars in heaven are shining down
> And their light falls on the dew;
> Smolensk is already lost and gone
> And we're going to lose Moscow too.

And she expressed the desire:

> We only wish they'd bomb the school,
> We're awfully tired of studies.

Naturally these full-grown men engaged in saving their Motherland deep in the rear in Tambov, these knights with hot hearts and clean hands, had to scotch such a mortal danger.[3] Nina

3. Won't we ever someday, won't we ever, haul out at least one such mole who authorized the arrest of an eighth-grader because of a rhyme? To see what his forehead is like? And his ears?

was arrested. Confiscated for her interrogation were her diaries from the sixth grade and a counterrevolutionary photograph: a snapshot of the destroyed Vavarinskaya Church. "What did your father talk about?" pried the knights with the hot hearts. Nina only sobbed. They sentenced her to five years of imprisonment and three years' deprivation of civil rights (even though she couldn't lose them since she didn't yet have them).

In camp, of course, she was separated from her father. The branch of a white lilac tree tormented her: her girl friends were taking their examinations! Nina suffered the way a real criminal was supposed to suffer when being reformed: "What did my classmate Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya do? And how foul a thing am I!" The security officers pushed down hard on that pedal: "But you can still catch up with her! Just *help* us!"

Oh, you corrupters of young souls! How prosperously you are living out your lives! You are never going to have to stand up somewhere, blushing and tongue-tied, and confess what slops you poured over souls!

But Zoya Leshcheva managed to outdo her whole family. And here is how. Her father, her mother, her grandfather, her grandmother, and her elder adolescent brothers had all been scattered to distant camps because of their faith in God. But Zoya was a mere ten years old. They took her to an orphanage in Ivanovo Province. And there she declared she would never remove the cross from around her neck, the cross which her mother had hung there when she said farewell. And she tied the knot of the cord tighter so they would not be able to remove it when she was asleep. The struggle went on and on for a long time. Zoya became enraged: "You can strangle me and then take it off a corpse!" Then she was sent to an orphanage *for retarded children* —because she would not submit to their training. And in that orphanage were the dregs, a category of kids worse than anything described in this chapter. The struggle for the cross went on and on. Zoya stood her ground. Even here she refused to learn to steal or to curse. "A mother as sacred as mine must never have a daughter who is a criminal. I would rather be a political, like my whole family."

And she became a political! And the more her instructors and the radio praised Stalin, the more clearly she saw in him the

culprit responsible for all their misfortunes. And, refusing to give in to the criminals, she now began to win them over to her views! In the courtyard stood one of those mass-produced plaster statues of Stalin. And mocking and indecent graffiti began to appear on it. (Kids love sport! The important thing is to point them in the right direction.) The administration kept repainting the statue, kept watch over it, and reported the situation to the MGB. And the graffiti kept on appearing, and the kids kept on laughing. Finally one morning they found that the statue's head had been knocked off and turned upside down, and inside it were feces.

This was a terrorist act! The MGB came. And began, in accordance with all their rules, their interrogations and threats: "Turn over the gang of terrorists to us, otherwise *we are going to shoot the lot of you* for terrorism!" (And there would have been nothing remarkable if they had: so what, 150 children shot! If He Himself had known about it, he would himself have given the order.)

It's not known whether the kids would have stood up to them or given in, but Zoya Leshcheva declared: "I did it all myself! What else is the head of that papa good for?"

And she was tried. And she was sentenced *to the supreme measure*, no joke. But because of the intolerable humanitarianism of the 1950 law on the restoration of capital punishment the execution of a fourteen-year-old was forbidden. And therefore they gave her a "tenner" (it's surprising it wasn't twenty-five). Up to the age of eighteen she was in ordinary camps, and from the age of eighteen on she was in Special Camps. For her directness and her language she got a second camp sentence and, it seems, a third one as well.

Zoya's parents had already been freed and her brothers too, but Zoya languished on in camp.

Long live our tolerance of religion!

Long live our children, the masters of Communism!

And let any country speak up that can say it has loved its children as we have ours!

Chapter 18

■

The Muses in Gulag

It was an accepted saying that *everything is possible* in Gulag. The blackest foulness, any twist and turn of betrayal, wildly unexpected encounters, love on the edge of the precipice—everything was possible. But if anybody should ever try to tell you with shining eyes that someone was re-educated by government means through the KVCh—the Cultural and Educational Section—you can reply with total conviction: Nonsense!

Everyone in Gulag was re-educated—re-educated under one another's influence and by circumstances, re-educated in various directions. But not even one juvenile, let alone any adult, was re-educated by means of the KVCh.

However, so that our camps might not be like "dens of depravity, communes of brigandage, nurseries of recidivists, and conductors of immorality" (this is how Tsarist prisons were described), they were equipped with such an appendage as the Cultural and Educational Section.

Because, as was said by the then head of Gulag, I. Apeter: "To the prison construction of capitalist countries, the proletariat of the U.S.S.R. counterposes its cultural [and not its camp!—A.S.] construction. Those institutions in which the proletarian state enforces deprivation of freedom . . . can be called prisons or by some other name—*it is not a matter of terminology*. . . . These are places where life is not killed off but, instead, gives forth new shoots. . . .[1]

I don't know how Apeter ended. There is a great likelihood, I

1. Vyshinsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 431, 429, 438.

think, that they soon wrung his neck, too, in those very places in which, as he said, life gives off new shoots. But it is not a matter of terminology. Has the reader now understood what the main thing was in our camps? *Cultural* construction.

And for every need an organ was created, and multiplied, and its tentacles reached out to every island. In the twenties they were called PVCh's—Political Educational Sections—and, from the thirties on, KVCh's. They were supposed in part to replace the former prison priests and prison religious services.

Here is how they were organized. The chief of the KVCh was a free employee with the authority of an assistant to the chief of camp. He picked out his own instructors (the norm was one instructor to 250 wards), who had to be from "strata close to the proletariat," which meant, of course, that intellectuals (the petty bourgeoisie) were unsuitable (it was more decent for them to be swinging a pick), so they recruited as instructors thieves with two or three convictions, urban swindlers, embezzlers, and seducers along with them. And so it was that a young fellow who had kept himself sort of clean and who had got five years for rape with mitigating circumstances might roll up his newspaper and go off to the barracks of the 58's to lead a little discussion on "The Role of Labor in the Process of Correction." The instructors had a particularly good outside view of that role because they themselves had been "released from the productive process." Similar such socially friendly elements made up the *activists' group of the KVCh.* But the activists were not released from work. (They could only hope that in time they would be able to do in one of the instructors and take over his job. This created a generally friendly atmosphere in the KVCh.) In the mornings the instructor had to see the zeks off to work; then he would inspect the kitchen (i.e., he would be well fed), and then he would go catch up on his sleep in his cabin. He would be ill-advised to tangle with or touch *the thief ringleaders* because, in the first place, it was dangerous, and, in the second place, the moment would come when "criminal cohesion would be transformed into a productive cohesion." And at that point the thief ringleaders would lead the shock brigades into storm assaults. And so, for the time being, let them, too, just sleep it off after their night-long card games. But the instructors are constantly guided in their activity by the general overall thesis that cultural

and educational work in the camps is not cultural and educational work "with unfortunates," but cultural and productive work with a knife edge (we just can't get along without that knife edge), directed against . . . yes, you've guessed it: against the 58's. Alas, the KVCh "does not have the right to arrest" (now this was such a limitation on its cultural opportunities!) but "could make a request to the administration" (which would not refuse!). And, besides, the instructor "systematically presents reports on the *moód* of the zeks." (He who has an ear to hear, let him hear! At this point the Cultural and Educational Section delicately shades into the Security Section. But this is not spelled out in the instructions.)

However, we see that, carried away by our quotations, we have grammatically slipped into the present tense. We have to disappoint the reader with the fact that the matter concerns the thirties, the finest, most flourishing years of the KVCh, when a classless society was being built in the country, and when there had not yet occurred the awful outburst of class struggle that did occur the moment that society was achieved. In those glorious years the KVCh expanded into many important appendages: the cultural councils of those deprived of freedom; cultural and educational commissions; sanitary and living conditions commissions; shock-brigade staffs; inspection posts for fulfillment of the production and financial plan, etc. . . . Well, as Comrade Solts (the Curator of the Belomor Canal and Chairman of the Commission of VTsIK on particular amnesties) said: "Even the prisoner in prison must live by what the whole country is living by." (That foul enemy of the people, Solts, was justly punished by proletarian justice—I beg your pardon . . . that fighter for the great cause, Comrade Solts, was slandered, and perished in the years of the cult—oh, I beg your pardon . . . at the time of the insignificant phenomenon of the cult. . . .)

And how variegated and varied were the forms of work! Like life itself. Organization of competition. Organization of shock-worker movements. Struggle for fulfillment of the production and financial plan. Struggle for labor discipline. Storm assault on the liquidation of hold-ups. Cultural crusades. Voluntary collection of funds for airplanes. Subscription to loans. "Voluntary Saturdays" for strengthening the defense capabilities of the country. Exposure of fake shock workers. Conversations with malingerers. Liquidation of illiteracy (they went unwillingly).

Professional and technical courses for camp inmates from among the workers (the thieves pushed hard to learn to be drivers: freedom!). And fascinating lectures on the inviolability of socialist property! And simply reading the newspapers aloud! Evenings of questions and answers. And "Red Corners" in every barracks! Graphs of fulfillment of plan! Statistics on goals! And what posters! What slogans!

In this happy time the Muses soared over the gloomy expanses and chasms of the Archipelago—and the first and highest muse among them was Polyhymnia, the muse of hymns (and of slogans):

The brigade that excels gets . . . praise and respect!
Do your shock work—get time off your sentence!

Or:

Work hard—your family waits for you at home!

You see how clever this is psychologically! After all, what do you have here? First: if you have forgotten about your family, this will start you worrying about them, and remind you of them. Second: if you are intensely alarmed, it will calm you down; your family exists and has not been arrested. And in the third place: your family does not need you *just for your own sake*, but needs you only through conscientious camp work. Lastly:

Let's join in the shock assault in honor of the seventeenth anniversary of the October Revolution!

Who could resist that?

Then there were theatricals with politically relevant themes (a little bit from the muse Thalia). For example: the servicing of the Red Calendar! Or the living newspaper! Or propaganda mock trials! Or oratorios on the theme of the September Plenum of the Central Committee in 1930! Or a musical skit, "The March of the Articles of the Criminal Code" (Article 58 was a lame Baba-Yaga)! How this all brightened the life of the prisoners and helped them reach upward toward the light!

And the recreation directors of the KVCh! And then the atheistic work too! The choirs and glee clubs (under the shade of the muse Euterpe). And then those propaganda brigades:

The shock workers swing their shoulders,
Hurrying with their wheelbarrows!

39. Propaganda brigade

40. Propaganda brigade

You see what bold self-criticism this is! They were not even afraid to touch on the shock workers! In fact, it was quite enough for a propaganda brigade (Illustration No. 39) to come to a penalty sector and give a concert there:

Listen, listen, River Volga!
Night and day beside the zeks,
On the site stand the Chekists!
What that means is: never fear;
The workers have a strong, strong arm,
The OGPU men are Communists![2]

And all the penalty workers and in particular the recidivists would throw down their playing cards and rush off to work immediately!

And there were other measures as well: A group of the best shock workers would visit a Strict Regimen Company or a penalty isolator and take a propaganda brigade with them (for example, one like this—in Illustration No. 40). At the beginning the shock workers would reproach and shame the malingerers, *explain* to them the *advantages* of fulfillment of the work norms (they would get better rations). And then the propaganda brigade would sing:

Everywhere the battles call,
And the Moscow-Volga Canal
Conquers snow and cold!

And then with total frankness:

And so that we'll live better,
In order to eat, in order to drink—
We have to dig the ground better!

And they invited all volunteers not only to return to the compound but to transfer immediately into a *shock workers'* barracks (from the penalty barracks), where they would be fed right on the spot! What an artistic success! (The propaganda brigades, except for the central one, were not released from work themselves. They got an extra portion of grits on the days of their performances.)

And what about more delicate types of work? For example: "the struggle with the aid of the prisoners themselves against equalizing wages." You just have to ponder what a profound

2. This was in Yagoda's day.

thought is contained here! This means that at a brigade meeting a prisoner would stand up and say: Don't give him a full ration; he worked badly; you'd do better to give the seven ounces to me instead!

Or the comrades' courts? (In the first years after the Revolution these were called "moral comrades," and they embraced games of chance, fights, thefts—but were these really a business for a court? And the word "moral" smelled to high heaven of bourgeois morality, and it was abrogated. From the period of reconstruction [from 1928] these courts began to deal with absenteeism, with simulating illness, a poor attitude toward inventory, spoiled production, spoilage of materials. And so long as hostile-class elements among the prisoners did not worm their way into the comrades' courts [and only murderers, thieves converted to *bitches*, embezzlers, and bribe takers appeared there], the courts in their sentencing would petition the camp chief for such penalties as deprivation of visits, food parcels, time off sentence, release on parole, and the dispatch of incorrigibles on prisoner transports. What reasonable, fair measures these were, and how particularly useful it was that the initiative in applying them came from the prisoners themselves! [Though not, of course, without certain difficulties!] They commenced the trial of a former "kulak" in a comrades' court, and he said: "You have a comrades' court, and to you I'm a 'kulak,' not a comrade. So you have no right to judge me!" They were thrown into confusion. They consulted the Political Education Section of the Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps and received the reply: Try him! Try him! Don't fool around!)

What was the foundation of foundations of all the cultural and educational work in camp? "Don't leave the camp inmate to himself after work—so he will not revert to his former criminal tendencies." (Well, for example, so that the 58's wouldn't start thinking about politics.) It was important that "the prisoner should never get out from under the educational influences."

And in this regard advanced modern technical devices were very helpful, and in particular the loudspeakers on every pillar and in every barracks! They must never fall silent! They must explain to the prisoners constantly and systematically from reveille until taps how to advance the hour of freedom; they reported every hour on the course of the work, on the leading and lagging work brigades, on those who were hindering. And

one could recommend another original format: a conversation on the radio with individual malingerers and slackers.

Well, and there was the press—of course, the press! The sharpest weapon of our Party. Now this was the real proof that in our country there was freedom of the press: the existence of a press in prisons! Yes! In what other country was it still possible for prisoners to have their own press?

First there were handwritten wall newspapers, and second, mimeographed or printed ones, and in both cases they had fearless *camp correspondents* who scourged faults (of the prisoners), and this self-criticism was encouraged by the Leadership. The extent to which the Leadership itself attributed significance to the free camp press is indicated even by Order 434 of Dmitlag: "The overwhelming majority of the criticisms arouse no response." The newspapers also published photos of the shock workers. The newspapers pointed the finger. The newspapers disclosed. The newspapers also exposed the sallies of the class enemy—so he could be hit harder. (The newspaper was the best collaborator of the Security Section!) And overall the newspapers reflected the flow of camp life and are invaluable testimony for descendants.

Here, for example, is the newspaper of the Archangel Prison in 1931, and it depicts for us the bounty and prosperity in which the prisoners were living: "Cuspidors, ashtrays, oilcloth on the tables, radio loudspeakers, portraits of the leaders, and slogans on the walls speaking vividly of the general Party line—these are the *well-earned fruits* which those deprived of freedom enjoy!"

Yes, dear fruits! And how did this affect the lives of those deprived of freedom? The same paper half a year later: "Everyone has set to work energetically. . . . The fulfillment of the production and financial plan has risen. . . . The food has decreased and worsened."

Well, that's all right! That, as it happens, is all right! The last element . . . could be corrected.[3]

And where, oh, where, has all that gone? . . . Oh, how transitory everything beautiful and perfect is on Earth. Such an intensive, hearty, optimistic system of education of the merry-go-round type, flowing from the very sources of the Progressive Teaching, promising that within a few years not one single crimi-

3. So far, the materials for this chapter have been drawn from the collection of articles edited by Vyshinsky, *op. cit.*, and from Averbakh, *op. cit.*

nal would be left in our country. (On November 30, 1934, it particularly seemed like that.)* And where then? All of a sudden the ice age set in (which, of course, was very necessary and absolutely indispensable!), and all the petals of those tender beginnings were scattered to the winds. And where did the shock-worker movement and socialist competition disappear to? And the camp newspapers? Storm assaults, collections of funds, subscriptions to loans, and unpaid Saturdays? Cultural councils and comrades' courts? Literacy drives and technical courses? What did it matter when they even issued orders that the portraits of the Party leaders and the loudspeakers should be removed from the camp compounds! (And they didn't go putting any more cuspidors around either.) And how the life of the prisoners suddenly paled! How it was suddenly thrown back whole decades, deprived of the most important revolutionary prison gains! (But we are not protesting, the measures of the Party were both timely and very much needed.)

No longer was the artistic-poetical form of slogans valued, and the slogans, too, were now only the simplest: Fulfill! Overfulfill! Of course, no one undertook to forbid directly aesthetic indoctrination or the fluttering of the muses, but the possibilities for this were greatly narrowed. Here, for example, is one of the camp compounds in Vorkuta. The nine-month winter came to an end, and the unreal, three-month-long, somehow pitiful summer set in. The chief of the KVCh was pained because the camp compound looked foul and dirty. In such conditions a criminal could not properly meditate on the perfection of the system from which he had excluded himself. So the KVCh proclaimed several working Sundays. In their free time the prisoners took great pleasure in making some "flowerbeds"—not out of anything growing, for nothing would grow there, but instead of planting flowers, they just decorated dead mounds skillfully with mosses, lichens, broken glass, crushed stone, slag, and broken-up brick. And then around these "flowerbeds" they set up little fences made of plasterer's lath. Though it turned out to be not quite so beautiful as the Gorky Park, nonetheless the Cultural and Educational Section was satisfied. Were you going to say that in two months' time the rains would fall and wash it all away? Well, so what, they would wash it away. Next year we will do it all over again.

Or what did the political chats turn into? A lecturer came to Unzhlag No. 5 from Sukhobezvodny (this in 1952). After work

the zeks were herded to the lecture. The comrades, it is true, had no secondary education, but he delivered a necessary and topical lecture which was fully correct politically: "On the Struggle of the Greek Patriots." The zeks sat there sleepily, hiding behind each other's backs, without the slightest interest in it. The lecturer described the awful persecutions of the patriots and related how the Greek women, in tears, had written a letter to Comrade Stalin. The lecture came to an end, and Sheremeta, a woman from Lvov, who was simple-minded but cunning, rose and asked him: "Citizen Chief! Tell me, who should *we* write to?" And by this the positive influence of the lecture was reduced to zero.

The types of correctional and educational work which the KVCh retained were these: To a prisoner's petition to the camp chief they would add a notation on norm fulfillment and conduct; they would deliver to the various rooms letters released by the censor; they would bind newspapers in a file and hide them from the zeks so they couldn't use them for cigarette paper; three times a year they gave amateur theatrical programs; they procured paints and canvas for artists so the latter could provide decorations for the camp compound and paint paintings for the chiefs' apartments. And then they would help the security chief a bit, but that was unofficial.

After this it is not surprising that the workers of the KVCh themselves were not flaming, bold leaders but for the most part dimwits and sad sacks.

Yes! There was one more important type of work which they did! *Maintaining the boxes!* They had to be opened at intervals, cleaned out, and locked up again—small brownish-colored boxes hung in a prominent place in the compound. On the boxes were labels: "To the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.," "To the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R.," "To the Minister of Internal Affairs," "To the Prosecutor General."

Go ahead and write—you have freedom of speech here. And we will decide what goes to whom. There are special comrades here to read it.

■

What is put into these boxes? *Petitions asking pardon?*

Not only. Sometimes denunciations too (from beginners). The KVCh sorts out that they are not to go to Moscow but to

the office next door. And what else? Well, the inexperienced reader is not going to guess! There were also inventions! The greatest inventions, intended to turn all modern technology upside down—or at any rate to liberate their inventors from camp.

There are many more inventors—as also poets—among plain ordinary people than we imagine. And in camp especially. One has to try to get released, right? Invention is a form of escape which doesn't involve the risk of a bullet or a beating.

At line-up before work and after, with hand barrows and picks, these servitors of the muse Urania (she is the closest you can come) wrinkle their brows and strive to invent something to astound the government and fire its greed.

Here is Lebedev, a radio operator from the Khovrino Camp. Now that he has been turned down there is nothing more to hide, and he admits to me that he discovered a deviation of the compass needle from the odor of garlic. From this he had envisioned a way to modulate high-frequency waves with an odor and thereby transmit an odor over a great distance. However, government circles did not see any military advantage in this project and were not interested. That meant it didn't come off. Either go on bending your back or think up something better!

One or another fellow—true, very rarely—would be suddenly taken off somewhere. He would not explain or say anything himself, so as not to spoil things, and no one in the camp could figure out why this particular person had been taken off somewhere. One might disappear forever, and another might be brought back after a time. He would still not say what it was about, so as not to become a laughingstock. Or he would put on an air of great mystery. This, too, was typical of the zeks: telling something to exaggerate their importance.

But having myself been on the Islands of Paradise, I had had the opportunity of seeing both ends of the pipeline: *where* this got to and how they read things there. And here I am going to allow myself to amuse the patient reader of this not-so-very-cheery book.

There was a certain Trushlyakov, formerly a Soviet lieutenant, shell-shocked in Sevastopol, taken prisoner there, dragged subsequently through Auschwitz, and as a result of all this a little touched. He managed to propose from camp something so intriguing that it led to his being brought to a scientific research

institute for prisoners—i.e., a sharashka. There he proved to be a genuine fountain of inventions, and no sooner had the chiefs rejected one of them than he immediately proposed the next. And even though he did not get even one of these inventions to the calculating stage, he was so inspired, so impressive, spoke so little, and had such an expressive look, that not only did no one dare suspect him of swindling, but one of my friends, a very serious engineer, insisted that in the profundity of his ideas Trushlyakov was the twentieth-century Newton. I, it is true, did not follow up on all his ideas to the very end, but he was entrusted with working out and preparing a *radar absorber* which he himself had proposed. He demanded help in higher mathematics, and, as a mathematician, I was assigned to him. Here is how Trushlyakov set forth his idea:

In order not to reflect radar waves, a plane or a tank must be covered with a certain material made up of many separate layers. (What sort of material this was Trushlyakov never told me; either he had not yet selected it or else this was the inventor's main secret.) The electromagnetic wave had to lose all its energy through the multiple refractions and reflections back and forth at the edges of these layers. And now, without knowing the characteristics of the material, yet making use of the laws of geometrical optics and any other means available to me, I was supposed to prove that everything would work out as Trushlyakov had predicted—and in addition select the optimal number of layers!

Naturally, I could do nothing! Nor did Trushlyakov do anything either. Our creative alliance collapsed.

Soon afterward, Trushlyakov brought me in my capacity as librarian (I was also librarian there) a requisition for an interlibrary loan from the Lenin Library. Without indicating authors or publications, the requisition consisted of the following: "Something relating to the technology of interplanetary travel."

Since we were only in the year 1947 at the time, the Lenin Library had almost nothing to offer him other than Jules Verne. (People thought little of Tsiolkovsky at that time.) After an unsuccessful attempt to set up a flight to the Moon, Trushlyakov was expelled thence into the abyss—back to camp.

But the letters kept coming and coming. I was subsequently attached (this time as a translator) to a group of engineers in-

vestigating the piles of claims to inventions and patents coming in from the camps. A translator was required because many of the documents arriving in 1946 and 1947 were in German.

But these were not claims to patents! And they were not voluntary compositions either! It was shameful and painful to read them. They had been extorted, exacted, sweated out of German war prisoners. For it was clear that we could not succeed in holding these prisoners as war prisoners for all eternity. It might be three years or it might be five after the end of the war, but sooner or later they would have to be released "nach der Heimat." It was therefore necessary during the years they were here to squeeze out everything which could be useful to our country. We had to try to get even this pale reflection of those German patents that had been carted off to the Western zones.

I could easily picture how it had been done. The unsuspecting and dependable Germans were instructed to report their fields of specialization, where they had worked, and in what capacity. Then, naturally, the Security Operations Third Section summoned all the engineers and technicians into their office one at a time. They were first questioned with respectful attention (this flattered the Germans!) about the kind and nature of their prewar work in Germany. (They had already begun to think that perhaps they would be given more privileged work instead of camp work.) Then a signed agreement on nondisclosure was required of them. (And once something is "verboten" to a German he will not violate it.) And, finally, they were confronted with a harsh demand to set forth in writing all the interesting details of their field of production and describe any important technical innovations used there. Then the Germans came to realize belatedly what kind of trap they had been caught in by bragging about their former jobs! But they could not just write *nothing at all* now—for they were threatened in that event with never being allowed to return to their Motherland. (And in those years this seemed quite likely.)

With tormented consciences, depressed, barely pushing their pens, the Germans wrote. . . . The only thing that saved them and enabled them to avoid giving away serious secrets was the fact that the ignorant Security officers were incapable of fathoming the true nature of their testimony and valued it according to the number of pages. And we, going through it, were hardly ever

able to find anything substantial; the information was either contradictory or buried in a scientific fog with omission of the main thing, or else they seriously described "technical innovations" of a type well known to our grandfathers.

But the claims to patents in Russian—what servility they sometimes reeked of! Once again one can easily picture how these were written: how there in camp, on a pitiful free Sunday, the authors of these claims carefully hid what they were writing from their neighbors, probably lying and saying they were writing *petitions for pardon.* Nor could their dim minds foresee that it was not the lazy, well-fed Leadership that would read their calligraphy addressed to the Sovereign, but plain ordinary zeks like themselves.

And we leafed through sixteen big pages (paper begged from the KVCh) of the most detailed proposals: (1) "On the use of infrared rays for guarding camp compounds." (2) "On the use of photoelectric elements for counting the number of prisoners departing through the gatehouse." And the son-of-a-bitch included drawings too, and technical elucidations. And the preamble was as follows:

Dear Iosif Vissarionovich!

Even though I have been sentenced for my crimes under Article 58 to a long term of imprisonment, even here I remain devoted to my beloved Soviet government and wish to assist in the secure guarding of the fierce enemies of the people who surround me. If I am summoned from the camp and receive the necessary means, I guarantee to make this system work.

Now this was a "political" for you! This treatise went from hand to hand among us, amid exclamations and obscenities (all of us there were zeks). One of us sat down to write a review of the project: The project was technically illiterate . . . the project did not take into consideration . . . the project did not provide for . . . unprofitable . . . unreliable . . . it could lead to a weakening rather than a strengthening of camp guard. . . .

What are you dreaming of today, Judas, at your distant camp? I'll shove a pole down your throat. Drop dead, rat!

And here came a packet from Vorkuta. The author complains that the Americans have an atomic bomb and our Motherland hasn't. He writes that at Vorkuta he often ponders this fact, and that up there, behind barbed wire, he wishes to help the Party and

the government. And therefore he heads his project: "DAN—Disintegrating the Atomic Nucleus." But he has not perfected this project (a familiar picture) because of the lack of technical literature at the Vorkuta Camp. (As if there were any other literature there either!) And this savage merely asks us to send him in the meantime *instructions on radioactive disintegration*, after which he will undertake to complete his project for DAN.

Behind our desks we roll with laughter and almost simultaneously come to the same vulgar evaluation:

This here DAN
Is a ——ing sham.

And meanwhile really great scientists were done in and perished in camps. But the Leadership of our dear Ministry was in no hurry to seek them out there and to find worthier uses for them.

Aleksandr Leonidovich Chizhevsky served his whole term without ever being in a sharashka. Even before camp Chizhevsky was very much out of favor in our country because he had found a connection between revolutions on earth, biological processes on earth, and solar activity. His scientific scope was out of the ordinary: the problems he concerned himself with were unexpected and did not fit into the convenient, accepted classifications of the world of science; and it was not clear how they could be put to use for military and industrial purposes. Today, after his death, we read articles praising him: He established that the incidence of myocardiac thrombosis is sixteen times greater during electrical storms. He correctly predicted flu epidemics. He was in quest of a technique for the early discovery of cancer based on the graph of the subsidence reaction of red corpuscles. And he advanced the hypothesis of zeta radiation from the sun.

The father of Soviet space navigation, Korolev, was, to be sure, taken into a sharashka, but as an aviation scientist. The sharashka administration did not allow him to work on rockets, and he had to do that work at night.

(We don't know whether L. Landau would have been taken into a sharashka or shipped off to distant islands. He had already confessed, with a broken rib, to being a German spy, but was saved by the intervention of P. Kapitsa.) —

Konstantin Ivanovich Strakhovich, the great Russian specialist in aerodynamics and an extraordinarily versatile scientific mind,

after traveling on a prisoner transport from the Leningrad prison, became an auxiliary worker in the bath of the Uglich Camp. He now relates the whole story with his innocent childish laugh, which he amazingly retained throughout his whole tenner. After several months in a death cell, he then survived a serious attack of dystrophic diarrhea in camp. After that they assigned him to guard the entrance to the soaping room when the women's brigades were taking baths. (They had to assign stronger people to deal with the men—he couldn't have handled it.) His task was to be sure that the women entering the soaping room wore nothing and had empty hands, so that everything went to the fumigator, most of all the bras and panties, which the Medical Section considered the chief centers of lice infestation, and which the women tried particularly hard not to turn in and attempted to take through the bath with them. And Strakhovich looked like this: he had a Lord Kelvin beard and a forehead like a craggy cliff, with a brow double the ordinary height—you could hardly call it a forehead at all. The women pleaded with him and insulted him and grew angry at him and laughed at him and invited him to accompany them to a pile of twig brooms in the corner—nothing moved him and he was merciless. Then they unanimously and maliciously nicknamed him "The Impotent." And suddenly one fine day the authorities came and took this "Impotent" off to be in charge of no more and no less than the first turbojet engine project in the country.

But of those scientists who were allowed to die at general work we know nothing. . . .

And as for those arrested and destroyed in the heat of scientific discovery (like Nikolai Mikhailovich Orlov, who back in 1936 had worked out a method for the long-term preservation of foodstuffs), how are we to find out about them? After all, their discoveries *were shut down* following the arrest of the men who made them.

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In the fetid, oxygenless atmosphere of the camps, the sooty flame of the KVCh would sputter and flare up, casting the merest glimmer. But people would be drawn from various barracks and from various brigades even to this little flame. Some came

with a direct purpose: to tear paper from a book or newspaper to make a smoke, to get paper for a petition, or to write with the ink there. (Ink was not permitted in the barracks, and here, too, it was kept under lock and key; after all, ink can be used to forge rubber stamps!) And some came . . . just to put on airs: See how cultured I am! And some . . . to rub elbows and chatter with new people, someone other than their boring fellow brigade mates. And some came . . . to listen to the others and report to the "godfather." But there were others still who didn't themselves know why they were inexplicably drawn there for a short evening half-hour, tired as they were, instead of lying on their bunks, allowing their aching bodies to rest a little.

These visits to the KVCh brought the soul a mite of refreshment in imperceptible and unobvious ways. Even though those who stopped by were altogether the same sort of hungry zeks as the ones who stayed sitting on their brigade multiple bunks, here they didn't talk about rations, nor of portions of cereal, nor about norms. People here didn't talk about the things that made up camp life, and therein lay a protest of the heart and some relaxation for the mind. Here they talked about some kind of fabulous past which just could not have existed for these gray, famished, bedraggled people. Here, too, they talked about the indescribably blessed, free-moving life out in freedom of those fortunates who had somehow succeeded in not landing in prison. And people also talked about art here, sometimes so magically!

It was as if someone, when an evil spirit was raging, had drawn on the ground a weakly gleaming and foggily flickering circle—and it was just about to go out, but as long as it hadn't you could at least imagine that within that circle, for those half-hours, you were not in the power of the evil force.

Yes, and then, too, someone would sometimes be plucking at a guitar. Someone would be softly singing—a song that was not at all the kind permitted on the stage. And something would stir within you: Life . . . exists! It exists! And, looking happily around you, you, too, would want to express something to someone.

However, speak only guardedly! Listen, but keep pinching yourself. Take Lyova G——n. He was an inventor (and a student who had not completed the course in the auto engineering institute; he was planning to increase the efficiency of motors, but they took all his notes away when they searched his place).

He was also an actor and we were putting on Chekhov's *The Proposal* with him. He was a philosopher too, and was adept at such cute expressions as "I don't want to worry about future generations. Let them scratch around in the earth for themselves. I myself cling to life just like this!" He demonstrated by gripping the wood of the table with his fingernails. "Believe in lofty ideas? That's something to be said into a telephone with the wire pulled out. History is a disconnected chain of facts. Give me back my tail! An amoeba is more perfect than a human being: it has simpler functions." If you listened to him, he would explain in detail why he hated Lev Tolstoi, why he was intoxicated by Ilya Ehrenburg and Aleksandr Grin. He was also an obliging chap who didn't avoid hard work: he would hammer away at a wall with a cold chisel, true, in a brigade guaranteed 140 percent of norm. His father had been arrested and had died in 1937, but he himself was a nonpolitical offender imprisoned for forging bread-ration cards. However, he was ashamed of his own swindling article and tried to get closer to the 58's. He tried and tried to get closer. But then one day some camp trials began and this oh, so pleasant and interesting lad, "clinging to life," Lyova G——n, testified as a witness for the prosecution.[4] And it was a good thing if you hadn't said too much to him.

If there were eccentrics in camp (and there always were!), they could not avoid dropping in on the KVCh. They were bound to look in.

Take Aristid Ivanovich Dovatur—a real eccentric for you. A native of St. Petersburg, of French and Rumanian extraction, a classical philologist, for all the past and future a bachelor and a solitary. He was torn away from Herodotus and Caesar, like a cat from meat, and imprisoned in a camp. His heart was still full of unexpounded texts. And in camp he acted as if he were in a dream. He would have been finished off in the first week, but the doctors provided him with protection and set him up in the enviable position of medical statistician; and in addition, not without benefit to the freshly recruited camp medical assistants, Dovatur was instructed to give lectures twice a month! This was in camp—and they were in Latin! Aristid Ivanovich stood at a

4. And all those who "cling to life" too hard never particularly cling to the spirit.

small blackboard—and glowed, just as in his best university years! He wrote down strange columns of conjugations which had never ever loomed before the eyes of the natives, and at the sound of the crumbling chalk his heart beat voluptuously. His life was so quiet and so well set up! But disaster crashed on his head too: the camp chief considered him a rarity—an honest person! And he named him . . . manager of the bakery—the most lucrative of all camp positions! The man in charge of bread was in charge of men's lives! The road to this position was paved with the bodies and the souls of camp inmates—but few got there. And then and there this position fell from the heavens—to Dovatur, who was crushed by it. For one week he went about like a person condemned to death, even before taking over the bakery. He begged the camp chief *to have mercy on him* and to allow him to live, to keep his Latin conjugations and an unconfined spirit. And pardon came: a routine crook was named manager of the bakery.

And here is another eccentric who was always in the KVCh after work. Where else would he be? He had a big head and large features suitable for theatrical makeup, easily visible from far away. He had particularly expressive bushy eyebrows. And his look was always tragic. From a corner of the room he looked in dispiritedly on our skimpy rehearsals. This was Camille Leopoldovich Gontoir. In the first years after the Revolution he had come from Belgium to Petrograd to create a New Theater, a theater of the future. Who then could have foreseen how this future would go and that theater directors would be arrested? Gontoir fought both world wars against the Germans, the first in the West and the second in the East. And now he had been pasted with a tenner for treason to the Motherland. Which one? And when?

But of course the most noticeable people in the KVCh were the artists. They were the head men there. If there was a separate room, it was for them. If anyone was permanently released from *general work*, it was invariably they. Of all the servitors of the muses only they created real values—values you could feel with the fingers, hang up in apartments, sell for money. They did not, of course, paint their pictures out of their own inspiration. No one asked that of them, for how could a good painting come out of the head of a 58? They simply painted big copies from post-

cards. Some of them with a system of small squares and some without. And you couldn't find a finer piece of aesthetic merchandise in the entire taiga and tundra backwood: Just go ahead and paint, and we'll know where to hang it. Even if we don't like it right away. Vypirailo, the assistant commander of the platoon of guards, would come in and look at a copy of *Nero the Victor* by Deul:

"What d'ya call that? That a bridegroom there? Why is he so dark?"

But he would take it all the same. The artists also painted rugs with lovely ladies floating about in gondolas, with swans, sunsets, and castles—and all of it was very much in demand among the comrade officers. And not being fools, the artists also painted the same kind of rugs on their own, and the jailers sold them on the sly in the markets outside. They were in big demand. On the whole, the artists could make out in camp.

Sculptors had it worse. Sculpture for MVD personnel was something not pretty enough, not familiar enough, to be put in their homes—yes, and it took up room for furniture, and if you knocked it over, it would break. It was rare for sculptors to have work in camp, and when they did, it was usually combined with painting, as with Nedov. Even then Major Bakayev would walk in and see a statuette of a mother:

"Why did you make a weeping mother? In our country mothers don't weep!" And he reached out to break up the figure.

Volodya Klempner, a young composer, son of a well-to-do lawyer, and in terms of camp concepts still *an unbeaten newcomer*, took his own piano from home to the Beskudinovo Camp near Moscow. (This was unheard of in the Archipelago!) Allegedly he took it to strengthen mass cultural work, but in reality to continue his own composing. And he always had the key to the camp stage, and after taps he would play there by candlelight (the electricity had been shut off). Once he was playing there like that, writing down his new sonata, when he jumped at a voice behind him:

"It's sh-ack-les your music smells of!"

Klempner jumped up. From the wall where he had stood concealed, a major, the camp chief, an old Chekist, advanced on the candle—and behind him his immense black shadow grew. Now the major understood why this deceiver had sent for his piano.

He came up, took the music Klempner had written, and silently and gloomily began to burn it with the candle.

"What are you doing?" the young composer could not help but cry out.

"*Shove* your music!" the major declared still more positively through clenched teeth.

The ashes floated from the sheet and fell softly on the keyboard.

The old Chekist had made no mistake: that sonata really was written about the camps.[5]

If a poet announced himself in camp, he would be allowed to write captions beneath caricatures of prisoners and to compose jingles—also about violators of discipline.

No other theme was permitted either a poet or a composer. They were unable to make the camp chiefs anything tangible, useful, to be held in the hands.

And there were just no prose writers in camp because there were not supposed to be, ever.

When Russian prose departed for the camps, wrote B. Slutsky, it departed! And it never returned. It departed! And never emerged.

We shall never now be able to arrive at any judgment of the full scale of what took place, of the number who perished, or of the standard they might have attained. No one will ever tell us about the notebooks hurriedly burned before departures on prisoner transports, or of the completed fragments and big schemes carried in heads and cast together with those heads into frozen mass graves. Verses can be read, lips close to ear; they can be remembered, and they or the memory of them can be communicated. But prose cannot be passed on before its time. It is harder for it to survive. It is too bulky, too rigid, too bound up with paper, to pass through the vicissitudes of the Archipelago. Who in camp could make up his mind *to write?* A. Belinkov wrote, and his writings got to the "godfather"—and on the ricochet he got twenty-five years. There was M. I. Kalinina, no writer at all,

5. Soon they found an excuse to pin a new camp case on Volodya and sent him to the Butyrki for interrogation. He never returned to his camp, and his piano, of course, was never returned either. And did he survive himself? I do not know, but there is somehow no word of him.

who nonetheless wrote down in her notebook what was notable in camp life: "Perhaps it will be useful to someone someday." But it got to the security officer. And she was put in a punishment block. (But she got off easily.) Here is Vladimir Sergeyevich G——v, who, since he was not under convoy, while he was outside the camp compound, wrote over a period of four months somewhere there a chronicle of the camp, and in a dangerous moment he buried it in the ground, and he was sent away forever, and it remained in the ground. So inside the camp compound it was impossible, and outside the camp compound it was impossible, so where was it possible? Only in your head. But only verse can be written that way, prose can't.

It is impossible to estimate by extrapolating from the few who survived how many of us servitors of Clio and Calliope perished —because we, too, had no likelihood of surviving. (Going back over my own camp life, for example, I see that I was certain to die in the Archipelago—or else so to adapt myself in order to survive that even the need to write would have died. I was saved by a secondary factor, mathematics. And how could you take that into account in your calculations?)

From the thirties on, everything that is called our prose is merely the foam from a lake which has vanished underground. It is foam and not prose because it detached itself from everything that was fundamental in those decades. The best of the writers suppressed the best within themselves and turned their back on truth—and only that way did they and their books survive. And those who could not renounce profundity, individuality, and directness . . . inevitably had to lay down their heads during those decades, most often through camp, though some lost theirs through reckless courage at the front.

That's how our prose philosophers went beneath the ground. Our prose historians too. Our lyrical prose writers. Our prose impressionists. Our prose humorists.

And yet at the same time the Archipelago provided a unique, exceptional opportunity for our literature, and perhaps . . . even for world literature. This unbelievable serfdom in the full flower of the twentieth century, in this one and only and not at all redeeming sense, opened to writers a fertile though fatal path.[6]

6. I will be so bold as to elucidate this thought in its most general aspect. As long as the world has stood, there have always been until now two unmix-

Millions of Russian intellectuals were thrown there—not for a joy ride: to be mutilated, to die, without any hope of return. For the first time in history, such a multitude of sophisticated, mature, and cultivated people found themselves, not in imagination and once and for all, inside the pelt of slave, serf, logger, miner. And so for the first time in world history (on such a scale) the experience of the upper and the lower strata of society *merged*. That extremely important, seemingly transparent, yet

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able strata of society: the upper and the lower, the ruling and the ruled. This is a crude division, like all divisions, but if one classifies among the upper stratum not only those superior in power, money, and social position but also those superior in education, obtained through either family efforts or their own, in a word all those who do not need to work with their hands, then the division will be almost across the board.

Therefore we can expect four spheres of world literature (and of art in general, and ideas in general). The first sphere: those in the upper stratum portraying (describing, pondering) the upper stratum, in other words themselves, their own people. The second sphere: the upper stratum depicting or pondering the lower stratum, "the younger brother." The third sphere: the lower stratum depicting the upper. And the fourth: the lower portraying . . . the lower, i.e., itself.

The upper stratum always had the free times, an excess or at least a sufficiency of means, the education, the training. Those among them who wanted to could always master the artistic techniques and the discipline of thought. But there is one important law of life: Contentment always kills spiritual striving in a human being. And as a result this first sphere contained within it many satiated artistic distortions and many morbid and self-important "schools"—sterile flowerings. And only when writers who were either profoundly unhappy in their personal lives or had an overwhelming natural drive toward spiritual seeking entered that sphere as the bearers of culture was great literature created.

The fourth sphere is all the world's folklore. Leisure time here was broken up into tiny pieces—and was available to individuals in different ways. And the anonymous contributions to this culture also came in different ways—unpremeditated, through lucky moments of glimpsing a perfected image or turn of speech. But the actual creators of it were innumerable, and they were almost always oppressed and dissatisfied people. Everything created then passed through selection, washing, and polishing a hundred thousand times over, passing from mouth to mouth and year to year. And that is how we have come to possess our golden store of folklore. It is never empty or soulless—because among its authors there were none who were unacquainted with suffering. The written literature belonging to the fourth sphere ("proletarian," "peasant") is altogether embryonic, inexperienced, unsuccessful, because individual know-how has always been lacking here.

The written literature of the third sphere ("looking upward from below") suffered from the same faults of inexperience, but even worse: it was poisoned by envy and hate—sterile feelings which do not create art. It made the same mistake that revolutionaries continually make: ascribing the vices of the upper class to the class itself and not to humanity as a whole, while failing to imagine how notably they themselves inherit these vices. Or else, on the other hand, it was spoiled by servile fawning.

Morally, the second sphere of literature promised to be the most fertile

previously impenetrable partition preventing the upper strata from understanding the lower—pity—now melted. Pity had moved the noble sympathizers of the past (all the enlighteners!) —and pity had also blinded them! They were tormented by pangs of conscience because they themselves did not share that evil fate, and for that reason they considered themselves obliged to shout three times as loud about injustices, at the same time missing out on any fundamental examination of the human nature of the people of the lower strata, of the upper strata, of all people.

Only from the intellectual zeks of the Archipelago did these pangs of conscience drop away once and for all, for they completely shared the evil fate of the people! Only now could an educated Russian write about an enserfed peasant *from the inside* —because he himself had become a serf.

But at this point he had no pencil, no paper, no time, no supple fingers. Now the jailers kept shaking out his things and looking into the entrance and exit of his alimentary canal, and the security officers kept looking into his eyes.

The experience of the upper and the lower strata had merged—but the bearers of the merged experience perished. . . .

And thus it was that an unprecedented philosophy and literature were buried under the iron crust of the Archipelago.

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But the most populous of all the groups that visited the KVCh . . . were the participants in amateur theatricals. This particular function—directing amateur theatricals—still belonged to the

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("looking down from above"). It was created by people whose goodness, striving for the truth, and sense of justice had proved stronger than their soporific prosperity, and whose artistry was at the same time mature and on a high level. But the fault of this sphere was *the incapacity genuinely to understand.* These authors sympathized, pitied, wept, were indignant—and precisely because of this could not *understand precisely.* They always looked at things from the sidelines and from above. They simply could not climb into the *pelts* of the members of the lower stratum. And any who managed to get one leg over the fence could never get the other over.

Evidently man's nature is so egocentric that this transformation can only take place, alas, with the help of external violence. That is how Cervantes got his education in slavery and Dostoyevsky his at hard labor. In the Gulag Archipelago this experiment was carried out on millions of heads and hearts all at once.

aged and decrepit KVCh, just as it had when it was young and vigorous.[7] On individual islands of the Archipelago amateur theatricals rose and disappeared in alternating ebb and flow, but unlike the tides of the sea, this did not take place with regularity but in fits and starts for reasons known to the chiefs but not to the zeks, and perhaps because the chief of the KVCh had to make a mark in his report once every six months, and perhaps because they were expecting someone from up top.

Here is how it was done at the remote camps: The chief of the KVCh (who was never ordinarily seen in the camp compound anyway, everything being managed for him by a prisoner instructor) would summon an accordionist and tell him: "Here's what! Round up a choir![8] And see to it that it performs in a month's time."

"But, Citizen Chief, I don't read notes."

"What the hell do you need with notes! You just play a song everyone knows, and let the rest sing along."

And so the recruiting of a choir was announced, sometimes along with a dramatics group. Where were they going to practice? The KVCh room was too small for this, they needed a more spacious one, and, of course, there was no clubroom at all. Ordinarily the usual domain for this was the camp mess halls—constantly stinking with the steam from gruel, the odor of rotten vegetables and boiled cod. On one side of the mess halls was the kitchen, and on the other side either a permanent stage or a temporary platform. After dinner the choir and the dramatic circle assembled here. (The surroundings were like those in the drawing by A. G——n. [Illustration No. 41.] Except that the artist has depicted not their own local amateur stage group but a touring "culture brigade." The last dishes are about to be gathered up

7. The universal concern for amateur theatricals in our country, something on which, incidentally, no small amounts of money are spent, does have some sort of intent, but what? One cannot say immediately. Is it the inertia left over from what was once proclaimed in the twenties? Or is it, like sport, an obligatory means of distracting the people's energy and interest? Or does someone believe that all these songs and skits actually help the required processing of feelings?

8. The political leadership *both* in the army and out in freedom has a superstitious faith in the primary indoctrinational significance of *choirs* in particular. All the rest of the amateur theatrical activity could wither, but there has to be a choir! A singing collective. Songs could easily be checked out, they were all *ours!* And whatever you sing . . . you believe.

41. Amateur theatricals

and the last-leggers are about to be kicked out—and then the audience will be let in. The reader can see how cheerful the serf actresses are.)

How was one to coax the zeks to join in the amateur theatricals? For out of perhaps five hundred prisoners in the compound there might be three or four genuine amateur singers—so how was one to put together a choir? Well, the main bait in mixed camp compounds lay in encounters at the choir! (Let's take a look again at Illustration No. 39. Well, isn't it clear why they are all in the KVCh?) A. Susi, who had been appointed choirmaster, was astonished at how rapidly his choir grew, so much so that he could never fully rehearse them in any single song. New participants kept coming and coming. They had no voices. They had never sung before. But they kept begging, and how cruel it would have been to refuse them, to ignore their newly awakened thirst for art! However, many fewer choir members turned up at the actual rehearsals. (The reason was that the participants in the amateur theatricals were permitted to move about the compound, to and from rehearsals, for two hours after the bed curfew. And so they used these two hours to wind up their own affairs.)

And it was not unheard of for things like this to happen: Just

before the performance the only bass in the choir would be sent off on a prisoner transport (the transports were handled by a different department than the performance). Or the choirmaster—the same Susi—was summoned by the chief of the KVCh and told:

"We very much appreciate that you have worked so hard, but we can't let you perform at the concert, because a 58 doesn't have the right to lead a choir. So get a replacement ready; waving your arms around isn't like having a voice—you'll find someone."

And there were those for whom the choir and the dramatic circle were not merely a place to meet someone—but rather a counterfeit of life, or maybe not a counterfeit, but a reminder, instead, that life despite everything still exists, that it does go on existing. From the warehouse they would one day bring rough brown wrapping paper from cereal sacks—and it was handed round to write parts on. A time-honored theatrical procedure! And then, too, there was the distribution of roles! And the consideration of who would be kissing whom in the play! Who would be dressed in what! How to make up! How interesting it would look! On the night of the performance one could take a real mirror in one's hand and see oneself in a real dress from freedom and with rouged cheeks.

It was very interesting to dream about all that, but good Lord, the plays! What kind of plays they had there! Those special collections, inscribed "*For Use Only Inside Gulag!*" Why . . . "only"? Not "both for freedom and also for Gulag," but instead . . . "only inside Gulag." What this really meant was that it was such twaddle, such pigs' swill, that out in freedom they wouldn't swallow it, so pour it out for us! The stupidest and least talented writers deposited their most loathsome and rubbishy plays here! And if anyone wanted to put on a farce by Chekhov or something else, where was he supposed to find that play? It could not be found even among the free people in the whole settlement, and what the camp library had was Gorky, and even then pages had been torn out to roll smokes.

N. Davidenkov, a writer, assembled a dramatic circle in the Krivoshchekovo Camp. From somewhere he got an unusual playlet: it was patriotic and dealt with Napoleon's sojourn in Moscow! (And probably it was on a level with Rastopchin's posted

proclamations!)* They distributed the roles, and the prisoners rushed to rehearsals with great enthusiasm. So what could interfere now? The main role was played by Zina, a former teacher, arrested after remaining behind in occupied territory. She acted well, and the director was satisfied with her. All of a sudden there was a quarrel at one of the rehearsals: the rest of the women rebelled against Zina's playing the main role. This was not exactly a new situation, and it was one with which a director can ordinarily cope. But here's what the women were shouting: "It's a patriotic role, and she ——— Germans on occupied territory! Get out, bitch! Get out, you German whore! Before you get stomped!" These women were socially friendly and also perhaps from among the 58's, but not on a charge of treason. Did they think this up themselves, or did the Third Section suggest it to them? The director, in view of his article, was in no position to defend his actress. So Zina departed sobbing.

Does the reader sympathize with the director? Does the reader think that the dramatic circle had got into an impossible situation —for who, at this point, could be given the role of heroine and when could she learn it? But there are no impossible situations for the Security Section! They had made a mess of everything—and they will straighten it out! Two days later Davidenkov himself was taken off in handcuffs—for trying to transmit something outside the compound in writing (another camp chronicle?), and there was to be a new interrogation and trial.[9]

9. This is a camp recollection about him. On the other hand, it was discovered by accident that L. K. Chukovskaya knew Kolya Davidenkov in the queues outside the Leningrad prisons in 1939 when, toward the end of the Yezhovshchina, he was exonerated by an ordinary court while his codefendant, L. Gumilyev,* remained imprisoned. They did not restore the young man to his place in the institute, but took him into the army. In 1941 he was taken prisoner by the Germans near Minsk. He then escaped from a German POW camp—to England . . . and while there published, under a pseudonym (in order to spare his family), a book about his imprisonment in the Leningrad dungeons in 1938. (One has to suppose that in those days love for the Soviet ally prevented English readers from giving due credit to that book. Afterward it was forgotten and lost. But *our people* did not forget him.) He fought on the Western Front in the International Anti-Fascist Brigade and, after the war, was kidnaped back to the U.S.S.R., where he was sentenced to be shot, but this was commuted to a sentence of twenty-five years. Evidently, however, he was actually executed on the basis of the second camp case against him. (Under capital punishment, which was returned to us by the Decree of January, 1950.) In May, 1950, Davidenkov managed to send off his last letter from camp prison. Here are several phrases from it: "It is impossible to describe my whole incredible life during these years. . . . I have a different purpose: over ten

And so it wasn't necessary to find anyone to play the principal role! Napoleon would not be put to shame once more, nor would Russian patriotism once more be glorified! There would be no play at all! And there would be no choir. And there would be no concert. So amateur theatrical activity was at an ebb. The evening gatherings in the mess hall and the lovers' rendezvous would cease. Till the next rising tide!

And so it lived by fits and starts.

And sometimes everything would have already been rehearsed, and all the participants would have been left intact, and no one would have been rearrested before the performance, but the chief of the KVCh, Major Potapov, a Komi* (SevZhelDorlag), would pick up the program and see there "*Doubts*, by Glinka."

"What's this! Doubts? No doubts! No, no, don't even ask me!"—and he crossed it out.

And I once planned to read my favorite monologue—Chatsky's speech: "But who are the judges?" I had been accustomed to reading it since childhood and I valued it purely for its rhetoric, failing to notice that it was about today. I had no such thoughts. But at any rate I had not gone so far as to write in the program: "But who are the judges?" for they would have crossed it out. The chief of the KVCh came to rehearsal and jumped up at the line which went:

Their hostility to the free life was implacable.

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years I have managed to accomplish something: my prose, of course, has all perished, but my verses remain. I have read them to almost no one—there was no one to read them to. I remember our nights at the Five Corners and . . . conceived the idea that my verses must be got . . . into your wise and skilled hands. . . . Read them and if possible preserve them. Of the future, as of the past—not a word. Everything is finished." And the verses are preserved entire in L.K.'s hands. How I recognize that tiny script (I, too, wrote like that)—three dozen poems on a double-sided notebook sheet—you have to work so much into such a small area! Just imagine this despair at the very end of his life: waiting for death in a camp prison! And he entrusted his last hopeless outcry to "illegal" mail:

"I do not need clean bedclothes,
Don't open up the door!
And it must be true—
I'm a cursed and savage beast!
I know not what to do with you,
Or how to address you:
Shall I sing like a bird, or howl like a wolf,
Shall I roar or shall I snarl?"

And when I declaimed:

> Where, point out to me, are the fathers of the fatherland?
> Are they not those, rich with plunder?

he stamped his feet and indicated that I get off the stage that instant.

In my youth I had almost become an actor, but a weakness of the throat prevented me. And now, in camp, I sometimes appeared in stage performances, and was drawn to refresh myself in that brief, unreal oblivion, to see at close range the faces of women excited by the performance. And when I heard that special theatrical troupes consisting of zeks freed from general work existed in Gulag—genuine serf theaters—I dreamed of getting into such a troupe and by this means saving myself and breathing a bit more easily.

Serf theaters existed in every provincial camp administration, and there were even several of them in Moscow. The most famous was MVD Colonel Mamulov's serf theater at Khovrino. Mamulov watched jealously to make sure that none of the notable performers of Moscow who had been arrested should slip by him through Krasnaya Presnya. And he had his agents searching in other transit prisons too. In this way he collected a large theatrical troupe in his camp and the start of an opera company too. His was the pride of an estate owner: "I have a better theater than my neighbor does." There was also a theater in the Beskudnikovo Camp, but it was inferior in most respects. The serf owners took their players to one another on visits in order to brag about them. At one such performance Mikhail Grinvald forgot in what key to accompany the singer. Then and there Mamulov pasted him with ten days of cold punishment cell—where Grinvald fell ill.

There were other such serf theaters in Vorkuta, Norilsk, Solikamsk, on all the big Gulag islands. And in those areas these theaters became almost municipal theaters, almost academic theaters, and gave performances for free people in a municipal theater. The local MVD big shots sat haughtily with their wives in the first rows and watched their slaves with curiosity and contempt. And the convoy guards sat behind the scenes and in the boxes with their automatic pistols. After the performances those players who had won applause were taken back to camp,

and those who had fallen on their faces . . . to punishment block. Sometimes they were not even allowed to enjoy the applause. In the Magadan theater, Nikishov, the chief of Dalstroi, interrupted Vadim Kozin, a widely known singer at that time: "All right, Kozin, stop the bowing and get out!" (Kozin tried to hang himself but was taken down out of the noose.)

In postwar years many performers with famous names passed through the Archipelago: In addition to Kozin there were the actresses Tokarskaya, Okunevskaya, Zoya Fyodorova. There was a big to-do in the Archipelago over the arrest of the singer Ruslanova, and there were contradictory rumors about which transit prisons she had been at and to which camp she had been sent. They said that in the Kolyma she had refused to sing and had worked in the laundry. I do not know.

The idol of Leningrad, the tenor Pechkovsky, had been in an occupied area, at his dacha near Luga, at the beginning of the war and had subsequently performed for the Germans in the Baltic States. (His wife, a pianist, had been immediately arrested in Leningrad and had perished in the Rybinsk Camp.) After the war, Pechkovsky got a tenner for treason and was sent to PechZhelDorlag. The chief maintained him there as a VIP in a separate little house of his own, with two orderlies attached to him. And butter, raw eggs, and hot port wine were included in his rations. He used to dine with the wife of the chief of the camp and the wife of the chief of camp regimen. And he used to sing there, but once, they say, he rebelled: "I sing for the people, not for Chekists!" And so he was sent to the Special Camp, Minlag. (After he had served out his term he was never allowed to rise to the heights of his former concerts in Leningrad.)

The well-known pianist Vsevolod Topilin was not spared in the roundup of the Moscow People's Volunteer Corps in 1941 and was thrown into battle in the Vyazma encirclement with an 1866 Berdan rifle.[10] But in German captivity a music-loving German major who was camp commandant took pity on him—

10. All that panic with the Moscow Volunteer Corps—what a diabolical piece of hysteria that was! To throw urban intellectuals with Berdan rifles of the last century against modern tanks! We had bragged for twenty years that we were "prepared" and that we were strong. But in animal terror in the face of the attacking Germans we shielded ourselves with the bodies of scientists and actors so that our nonentities in the leadership could survive a few extra days.

and helped get him reclassified as an East Zone worker, and he began to give concerts again. And for this, of course, Topilin then received from us the standard tenner. (And after camp he, too, never succeeded in rising again.)

The ensemble of the Moscow Administration of Corrective Labor Camps and Colonies, which went around giving performances in the camps and which had been housed at Matrosskaya Tishina, was suddenly transferred for a while to our camp at the Kaluga Gates. What luck! So now I could get to know them. And perhaps now I would force my way through to them.

What a strange sensation! To watch a performance of professional zek actors in a camp mess hall! Laughter, smiles, singing, white dresses, black frock coats . . . But what were their sentences? Under what Code articles had they been imprisoned? Was the heroine a thief? Or was she here under the "universally available 58"? Was the hero here for bribery or for "Seven-eighths"? An ordinary actor has one reincarnation only—in his role. But here was a double drama, a double reincarnation. First one had to pretend to be a free actor or actress, and only then play a role. And all that weight of prison, that consciousness that you were a serf, that tomorrow the citizen chief might send you to the punishment block for playing your role badly or for a liaison with a serf actress, or to logging, or six thousand miles to the Kolyma. What an added millstone that must be—over and above the whole burden the zek actor shared with the free actors —that destructive straining of the lungs and throat in order to force through oneself a mass of dramatized emptiness, the mechanical propaganda of dead ideas?!

The heroine of the ensemble, Nina V., turned out to be there for 58-10, on a five-year sentence. We quickly found a common acquaintance—our joint teacher in the art history department of the Moscow Institute of Philosophy, Literature, and History. She was a student who had not completed her course, and she was very young. Abusing the prerogatives of an actress, she spoiled herself with cosmetics and with those vile, cotton-padded shoulders with which all women out in freedom were destroying their beauty at that time. The women in the Archipelago had not suffered that fate, and their shoulders had developed only from hauling hand barrows.

In the ensemble Nina, like every prima, had her own beloved

(a dancer of the Bolshoi Theatre), but she also had there her own spiritual father in dramatic art—Osvald Glazunov (Glaznek), one of the senior disciples of Vakhtangov. He and his wife were—and perhaps they had wanted to be—captured by the Germans at a dacha near Istra outside Moscow. They had spent three years of the war in their tiny homeland in Riga, where they had performed in the Latvian theater. With the arrival of our Soviet forces they had received a tenner each for treason to the big Motherland. And now they were both in the ensemble.

Izolda Vikentyevna Glazunova was already old. It was already hard for her to dance. Once only did we see her in a dance which was unusual for our time, which I myself would have called impressionist, but I am afraid to offend connoisseurs. She danced in a dark silvery costume that covered her completely on a half-illuminated stage. This dance has remained in my memory. Most modern dances are a display of the female body, and that is almost all they are. But her dance was some kind of spiritual, mystical recollection, and reflected in certain of its elements her own belief in the transmigration of souls.

Suddenly, several days later, furtively, the way prisoner transports were always gotten together in the Archipelago, Izolda Vikentyevna was sent off on a transport, torn away from her husband, carried off to oblivion.

Among the serf-owning landed gentry this used to be their own special form of cruelty and barbarism: to separate serf families, to sell off the husband and wife separately. And for that they caught it from Nekrasov, Turgenev, Leskov, and from everyone. But with us this was not cruelty, it was simply a wise and reasonable move: the old woman did not earn her ration, yet she was occupying a staff unit.

On the day his wife was sent off on the prisoner transport Osvald came to our room (the chamber of monstrosities) with eyes vacantly wandering, leaning on the shoulder of his frail adopted daughter, as if she were the only thing that gave him support. He was nearly insane, and one feared he might do away with himself. Then he fell silent and his head drooped. Then he gradually began to speak, to recall his entire life: He had for some reason created two theaters: because of his art he had left his wife all alone for years. He wished now he could relive his entire life differently. . . .

I remember them now as if they were sculptured: how the old man drew the girl to him by the back of her head, and how she looked up at him from under his arm, without stirring, suffering with him and trying not to weep.

But what is there to say—the old woman had not been worth her bread ration. . . .

■

Despite all my efforts, I did not succeed in becoming a member of that troupe. Soon afterward they left the Kaluga Gates and I lost sight of them. A year later I heard a rumor at the Butyrki that they had been traveling on a truck to one of their regular performances and had been hit by a train. I do not know whether Glazunov was there or not. But so far as I myself was concerned, I once more realized that the ways of the Lord are imponderable. That we ourselves never know what we want. And how many times in life I passionately sought what I did not need and been despondent over failures which were successes.

I remained there in the modest little amateur theatrical group at the Kaluga Gates along with Anechka Breslavskaya, Shurochka Ostretsova, and Lyova G. We did manage to put on something before they broke us up and sent us away. I now recall my participation in that amateur theatrical activity as a lack of spiritual toughness, as a humiliation. The worthless Lieutenant Mironov, if he had found no other distractions and entertainments in Moscow on a Sunday evening, could come to camp in his cups and give orders: "I want a concert in ten minutes." And the performers were routed out of bed or torn away from the camp hot plate if they happened at that moment to be engaged in cooking with relish something in their mess tins. And in a trice we would be singing, dancing, and performing on the brilliantly lit stage before an empty hall, in which the only audience was the haughty dolt of a lieutenant and a troika of jailers.

Chapter 19

■

The Zeks as a Nation

AN ETHNOGRAPHICAL ESSAY BY FAN FANYCH

In this study, if nothing prevents us, we intend to make an important scientific discovery.

In the development of our hypothesis we would in no way wish to come into conflict with the Progressive Teaching.

The author of these lines, attracted by the enigma of the native tribe populating the Archipelago, undertook a lengthy scientific expedition there and collected abundant material.

And as a result it is very easy to prove that the *zeks* of the Archipelago constitute a *class* of society. For, after all, this multitudinous group (of many millions) has a single (common to them all) relationship to *production* (namely: subordinate, attached, and without any right to direct that production). It also has a single common relationship to the *distribution of the products* of labor (namely: no relationship at all, receiving only that insignificant share of the products required for the meager support of their own existence). And, in addition, all their labor is no small thing, but one of the principal constituents of the whole state economy.[1]

1. You could never say this of the outcasts in Western countries. There they are either languishing in individual isolation, where they do no work whatever, or else there are a few pockets of hard labor, whose output has no impact at all on the economy of their country.

But our ambition is greater than this.

It would be much more sensational to prove that these degenerate creatures (in the past undoubtedly human) are a totally *different biological type* in comparison with homo sapiens.[2] However, these conclusions are not yet ready. Here it will be possible only to offer certain hints to the reader. Imagine that a man is forced suddenly and against his will, yet out of implacable necessity and without hope of any return, to make a transition into the category of bear or badger. (We are not going to employ here that overused image of the wolf.) And should it turn out that he proved physically able to make it (and anyone who cashed in his chips would not be in demand there anyway), how could he possibly remain a human being while leading a new life among the badgers? We think he could not, and that he would become a badger: fur would grow; his snout would lengthen and sharpen, and he would no longer want or need anything cooked or fried: and he would be quite content to bolt things raw.

Picture to yourself that the island environment differs so sharply from the normal human one and so cruelly confronts a man with the choice of immediate adaptation or immediate death that it grinds and masticates his character much more thoroughly than could a foreign national or a foreign social environment. And the only thing it can be compared with is a transmutation into the animal world.

But we will postpone this until our next work. Here we will set ourselves only the limited task of proving that the zeks constitute a special separate *nation.*

Why is it that classes do not become nations within nations in ordinary life? Because they live commingled on the same territory with other classes. They encounter them on the streets, in stores, on trains and steamers, at theaters and places of entertainment, and they converse and exchange ideas by voice and through the printed word. The zeks, on the contrary, live totally isolated on their islands, and their life passes in communication solely with one another. (The free employers, their chiefs, they in the majority do not even see, and when they do, they hear nothing from them except orders and oaths.) Their ostracism is made all

2. Perhaps they are, in fact, the "missing link" of the theory of evolution.

the more profound by the fact that the majority of them have no clear possibility of ever abandoning this state before death, in other words, of making their way out and up into other, higher classes of society.

Who among us did not learn by heart back in secondary school the one-and-only scientific definition of a nation given by Comrade Stalin, namely: A nation is an historically formed community of people (but one neither racial nor tribal), possessing a common territory, a common language, and a commonly shared economic life, a community of psychological outlook which is manifested in a community of culture? Well, now, the natives of the Archipelago satisfy all these requirements completely, and even more too! (We are particularly free to reach these conclusions because of Comrade Stalin's brilliant remark that a racial or tribal community of blood is not obligatory at all!)

Our natives occupy a fully defined *common territory* (even though it is broken up into islands, but this does not surprise us in the Pacific Ocean, for example) on which other peoples do not live. *Their economic way of life* is standardized to an astonishing degree; it can, in fact, be described completely and exhaustively on two typewritten sheets of paper (the differential ration system and the directions to the bookkeeping office to credit the zeks' imaginary wages to maintaining the camp compound, the guard, the leadership of the islands, and to the state). If one includes in the economy also the tenor of their *daily way of life*, then it is uniform on all the islands to such a degree (like nowhere else!) that zeks who have been moved from one island to another are never surprised, do not ask silly questions, and at once set about their affairs flawlessly from the very first. ("To eat on a scientific basis, to steal whenever you can.") They eat *food* which no one else on earth eats any more. They wear *clothes* which no one else wears any more. And even their *daily schedule* is identical on all the islands and obligatory for every zek. (Now what ethnographer is able to point to any other nation, all of whose members have uniform daily schedules and uniform food and clothing?)

What is comprehended under the heading of community of *culture* in the scientific definition of nations? This has been inadequately spelled out for us. We cannot require of the zeks any unity of science or belles-lettres for the simple reason that *they have no written language.* (But then this is also the case with most

other island natives, in the majority of cases for lack specifically of culture, but among the zeks . . . because of superfluity of censorship.) At the same time we hope to be able to demonstrate amply in our essay the zeks' community of *psychology*, the uniformity of their *day-to-day conduct*, even the uniformity of their *philosophical views*, of which other peoples could only dream and which is not provided for in the scientific definition of nations. It is in particular their clearly expressed *national character* that is immediately noted by the scholarly student of the zeks. They have their own folklore and their own hero images. Finally, they are tightly united by one more corner of culture indissolubly linked with *language*, and which we can describe only approximately by the pale term "matyorshchina"—mother cursing—(from the Latin *mater*). This is that special form of expressing the emotions which is even more important than all the rest of their language because it permits the zeks to communicate with one another in a more energetic and briefer form than that provided by the usual linguistic means.[3] The permanent psychological state of the zeks finds its best release and most accurate expression precisely in this highly organized mother cursing. And therefore all the rest of their language seems to recede into the background. But in this, too, we can observe from Kolyma to Moldavia the surprising similarity of expressions representing one and the same linguistic logic.

Without special study, the language of the natives of the Archipelago is quite as incomprehensible to the outsider as any foreign language. (Well, now, how for example would the reader understand such expressions as these:

"Skin the rag!"
"I'm still clicking!"
"Give a glimmer [about something]."
"To pick it off a lamppost!"
"Crook with crook and suckers out!")*

Everything said permits us to affirm boldly that the native condition in the Archipelago is a special national condition in which the former nationality of a human being is extinguished.

We can foresee an objection. They will ask us: Is this a

3. The economy of this means of communication compels one to ponder whether it does not contain the rudiments of the Language of the Future.

people if its ranks are not replenished by the usual method of child-bearing? (Incidentally, in the one-and-only scientific definition of nations which we have cited, no such criterion is stipulated!) Let us reply: Yes, its ranks are replenished by the technical method of *jugging* (and, out of some strange caprice, its own infants are turned over to neighboring peoples). However, chicks, after all, are hatched in an incubator, yet we do not, for this reason, cease to regard them as chickens when we use their meat.

But even if some sort of doubt does arise as to how the zeks *begin their existence*, at least there can be no doubt whatever as to the method by which they *cease* to exist. They die, like everyone else, only more densely and more prematurely. And their funeral rite is gloomy, meager, harsh.

Two words about the term *zek* itself. Up to 1934 the official term for them was "Lishonnye Svobody"—"Deprived of Freedom." This was abbreviated to L/S, and no evidence has been preserved as to whether the natives worked these initials "L" and "S" into "*elesy*," but from 1934 on the term was changed to "prisoners"—"zaklyuchennye." (Let us recall that the Archipelago had begun to harden by then, and even the official language adapted itself to this and could not tolerate there being more *freedom* than prison in the definition of the natives.) And they began to abbreviate the term: in the singular Z/K ("zeh-káh"), and in the plural Z/K Z/K ("zeh-káh, zeh-káh"). And this was pronounced very often by the natives' guardians and was heard by all, and all became accustomed to it. But this bureaucratic word could not be declined either by case or by number. It was a worthy offspring of a dead and illiterate epoch. The living ear of the alert natives could not reconcile itself to this situation, and in a spirit of mockery, on various islands, in various localities, they began to adapt it for themselves: in some places they said "Zakhar Kuzmich," or, in Norilsk, "Zapolyarnye Komsomoltsy" (Arctic Komsomols); in others (for instance, Karelia) they tended toward "zak," which was the most correct etymologically, and in others (for instance, Inta) they preferred "zyk." What I heard was "zek."[4] And in all such instances the new

4. The old Solovetsky Islands prisoner D.S.L. assures me that as far back as 1931 he heard a convoy guard ask a native: "Who are you? A zek?"

word thus brought to life was declined both by number and by case. (But in the Kolyma, insists Shalamov, they adhered in conversation to the official term "zeh-káh." One can only regret that the Kolyma ear must have been numbed by the cold.)*

■

The *climate* of the Archipelago . . . is always Arctic, even if a particular islet has intruded itself into the southern seas. The climate of the Archipelago is *twelve months of winter, the rest summer.* And the air itself there scorches and pricks one, not only because of the frost, not only because of nature.

Even in summer the zeks are dressed in the soft gray armor of padded jackets. This in itself, along with the men's cropped scalps, gives them a uniformity of *external appearance* smacking of severity, impersonality. But after observing the zeks even only a little, you will be equally astonished by the common elements in their facial expressions—always guarded, sullen, without the slightest good will, easily slipping into hardness and even cruelty. Their facial expressions look as if they have been cast from a swarthy, copper-colored material (the zeks evidently belong to the Indian race), rough-textured, almost not of flesh, so as to be able to march facing into the wind, expecting at every step to be bitten from the right or the left. You notice also that in action, at work, in a fight, their shoulders are squared, and their chests braced for resistance, but as soon as a zek is left in a state of inaction, by himself, buried in his thoughts, his neck ceases to support the weight of his head, and his shoulders and his back immediately express an inveterate stoop, as if he were born with it. The most natural position his hands adopt when free is clasped behind the back if walking, or simply hanging limply when sitting down. His stoop and his depressed air will remain with him when he approaches you—a free person and therefore a possible boss. He will try not to look you in the eyes and will instead look at the ground, but if he is forced to look at you—you will be surprised by his blank, stupid stare, even though it will indicate willingness to carry out your orders. (Do not trust it, however; he will not carry them out.) If you order him to take off his cap (or if he himself understands he should), his shaven scalp will surprise you unpleasantly anthro-

pologically with its bumps, hollows, and asymmetry of a clearly degenerate type.

In conversation with you he will be laconic, speaking without expression—either monotonously and dully or else with servility —if it is necessary to ask you for something. But if you somehow happen invisibly to overhear the natives when they are talking with one another, you will probably remember forever their special *manner of speech*—as if pushing the sounds out, maliciously mocking, brusque, and never heartfelt. This is so rooted in the natives that even when a man native is left alone with a woman native (which, incidentally, is strictly prohibited by the Archipelago laws) it is impossible to imagine his ridding himself of that manner of speech. In all probability he expresses himself to her too in a pushy, peremptory sort of way, for it is quite impossible to imagine a zek speaking tender words. But it is also impossible not to recognize the great energetic force of the zeks' language. In part this is because it is free of all kinds of superfluous expressions, of introductory phrases such as "pardon me," or "please," or "if you do not object," and also from superfluous pronouns and interjections. The speech of the zek moves straight to its goal, just as he himself pushes into the Arctic wind. He speaks as if he were punching his companion in the mug, beating him with words. Just as an experienced fighter invariably tries to knock his enemy off his feet with the very first blow, so the zek tries to confound his companion, to render him mute, and even to compel him to wheeze from the very first phrase. And he will flatly brush off any question directed at him.

Even today the reader may encounter this repellent manner in unforeseen circumstances. For example, when you are waiting at a trolleybus stop in a strong wind, your neighbor will spill a large hot ash on your new overcoat, threatening to scorch it. You demonstratively brush it off, but he continues to spill ashes on you. And you say to him: "Listen, comrade, how about being more careful with your smoking, eh?"

Not only does he not ask your pardon, and not only does he take no precautions with his cigarette, but he barks curtly: "Haven't you any insurance?"

And while you are trying to find an answer (you aren't going to find one), he already succeeds in clambering ahead of you onto the trolleybus. Now that is very much like the native manner.

Apart from their straight multisyllabic curses, the zeks evidently have a collection of ready-made expressions, which will paralyze any intelligent outside interference and directions. Such expression as: "Don't needle me, I'm of a different religion!"

"If they're not [beat]ing you, don't lie down and ask for it!"* (Here in brackets we have used a substitute for another—obscene—word, from which the second verb in the phrase also immediately acquires a quite indecent sense.)

Similar repellent expressions make a particularly indelible impression when coming from the mouths of the native women, since it is they in particular who make the most liberal use of erotically based metaphors. We regret that the bounds of morality do not permit us to embellish this inquiry with still other examples. We will venture to cite just one more illustration of the speed and deftness of the zeks in the use of language. A certain native named Glik was brought from an ordinary island to a special island—to a secret scientific research institute (certain natives are naturally developed to such a degree that they are even suitable for conducting scientific research)—but because of certain personal considerations the new and privileged place did not suit him and he wished to return to his former island. He was summoned before a very high-ranking commission, with big stars on their shoulder boards, and there they announced to him: "You are a radio engineer and we would like to make use of you—"

Without allowing them to finish their sentence with "in your profession," he straightened up sharply: *"Make use of me?* So what do you want me to do—turn around and bend over?"

And he reached for his belt buckle and made a motion as if to adopt the indicated position. Naturally the commission was struck dumb, and there was no deal. Glik was dismissed straightaway.

It is curious to note that even the natives of the Archipelago realize very well indeed that they arouse great interest on the part of anthropologists and ethnographers, and they even brag of this—it seems to increase their value in their own eyes. Among them there is a widespread, frequently told legendary anecdote about a certain professor of ethnography, evidently a predecessor of ours, who spent his whole life studying the breed of zeks and wrote a thick dissertation in two volumes in which he came to the final conclusion that *the prisoner is lazy, greedy, and sly.* (At this

juncture of the story both the storyteller and his listeners laugh complacently, as though admiring themselves from the sidelines.) But soon after, apparently, they *jugged* the professor himself. (This is a very unhappy ending, but since no one is imprisoned in our country unless guilty, then there must have been something to it.) Then after jostling his way through the transit prisons and when he himself became *a last-legger on general work*, the professor came to understand his error and to realize that in actual fact *the convict is rowdy, crafty, and transparent*. (And this is an extremely apt description and once again one that is somehow flattering. And they all laugh once again.)

We have already said that the zeks have no written language. But through the personal example of the veteran islanders, in oral tradition, and in folklore, the entire code of *correct* zek conduct has been elaborated and is transmitted to newcomers—basic precepts relating to their work, to their employers, to those around them, and to themselves. All this code, taken as a whole, is imprinted on and exemplified in the moral structure of the native, and produces what we can call *the zek national type*. The imprint of this affiliation is driven deep inside the human being once and for all. Many years later, if he turns up outside the Archipelago, the first thing you will recognize in the human being is the zek—and only secondarily the Russian, Tatar, or Pole.

In the rest of our exposition we will try to examine here trait by trait in complex detail the constituents of the folk character, the life psychology, and the normative ethics of the nation of zeks.

■

Attitude toward government *work*. The zeks have an absolutely false concept of work as something designed to suck their whole lives from them, which means that their chief salvation is this: while working, not to become absorbed in the work. It is well known to a zek that you can't do all the work (never rush, thinking that the sooner you finish, the sooner you can sit down and take a rest; the moment you sit down, you will immediately be given other work to do). *Work loves fools.*

But how do you do it? Do you flatly refuse to work? That is the worst thing the zek can do! He will rot in punishment blocks, die of starvation. Going to work is unavoidable. But once there, during the workday, what he has to do is not *slog away*, but "fiddle about," not *bend the back*, but *loaf, goldbrick* (which is to say, not work anyway). The native will never openly or flatly refuse to perform any order—that would be the end of him. Instead, what he does is . . . *stretch the rubber*. "Stretching the rubber" is one of the principal concepts and expressions of the Archipelago; this is the zek's main salvation and achievement. (Subsequently widely adopted by the sloggers out in *freedom* as well.) The zek listens carefully to all the orders he is given and nods his head affirmatively. And . . . he goes off to carry out those orders. But . . . he does not carry them out! Most often of all . . . he does not even begin! This sometimes leads to despair on the part of the purposeful and inexhaustible commanders of production! And naturally the desire arises . . . to hit him with a fist in the nose or on the back of the neck, this stupid dumb animal in tatters—after all, he has been told in the Russian language! What doltish obtuseness is this? (But that's the point: the Russian language is ill understood by the natives, and a whole series of contemporary concepts such as "workers' honor" and "conscientious discipline" have no equivalents in their wretched language.) However, no sooner has the chief rushed in for the second time than the zek obediently bends his back beneath the cursing and immediately begins to carry out the orders. The heart of the employer softens a little, and he goes on with his multitudinous urgent tasks of management—and the zek, behind his back, immediately sits down and stops working. (If there is no brigadier's fist hanging over his head, if he is not threatened with being deprived of his bread ration today, and also if there is no bait in the shape of time off sentence.) It is difficult for us normal people to understand this psychology, but that is how it is.

Obtuseness? Quite the contrary, it is the highest degree of understanding and adaptation to conditions. What can he count on? After all, work does not get done by itself, and if the chief comes around once more, will that be any worse? But here is what he is counting on: Most likely of all, the chief won't come around for the third time today. And you have to survive until tomorrow.

Tonight the zek might be sent off on a prisoner transport, or transferred to another brigade, or put in hospital, or imprisoned in the punishment block—and whatever he has done today will then be credited to someone else. Or tomorrow that same zek and that same brigade might well be transferred to some other work. Or else the chief might decide that what they were doing isn't necessary, or ought to be done quite differently. And on the basis of many such cases the zeks had firmly mastered the truth: *Do not do today what you can do tomorrow.* Or in zek lingo: *Wherever you sit down is where you get off.* He is fearful of expending an extra calorie where it maybe doesn't need to be expended. (Incidentally, the concept of calories is well known and very popular among the natives.) And that is how the zeks talk frankly among themselves: *The one who pulls is the one they urge on.* (And the one who doesn't, supposedly, is let off with a shrug.) In general the zek works *just to get through the day to the night.*

(But at this point scholarly integrity obliges us to admit a certain weakness in our course of reasoning. First of all, because the camp rule of "The one who pulls is the one they urge on" turns out to be simultaneously an old Russian proverb. And we also find in Dal[5] another purely zekish expression: *"He lives just to get through the day to the night."* Now this coincidence arouses a whole whirlwind of thoughts in us: The theory of borrowing? The theory of migratory themes? A school of mythology? Continuing these dangerous comparisons, we find among the Russian proverbs and sayings which took shape under serfdom and were already well established by the nineteenth century the following:

"Don't do the work, don't run from work." [Astonishing! This is the very principle of camp *"rubber."*]

"May God grant we know how to do everything, but not do it all."

"You will never finish the master's work."

"A zealous horse doesn't live long."

"They'll give you a chunk of bread, and for that you'll have to thresh for a whole week." [This is very much like the zeks' reactionary theory that even a big bread ration doesn't make up for the expenditure of energy in labor.]

So what conclusion is to be drawn from all this? That across

5. V. Dal, *Poslovitsy Russkogo Naroda* (*Proverbs of the Russian People*), Moscow, 1957, p. 257.

all the bright boundary lines of our emancipatory reforms, our enlightenment, our revolutions, and our socialism, the serfs of the Empress Catherine's time and the zeks of Stalin's time, notwithstanding their complete dissimilarity in social position, reach out to shake each other's black and horny hands? That is impossible!

At this point our erudition breaks down and we will return to our exposition.)

From the zek's relationship to his work there follows also his *relationship to his chiefs*. Outwardly the zek is very obedient. For example, one of the zek "commandments" is *Don't stick your neck out!* In other words, never talk back to the chiefs. In appearance the zek is very much afraid of the chief, bends his back when a chief scolds him or even just stands near him. But in fact this is a simple calculation: to avoid unnecessary punishments. In actual fact the zek utterly despises the bosses—both the camp chiefs and the production chiefs—but covertly conceals it so as not to suffer for it. Departing in a throng after any sort of work announcements, reprimands, or official rebukes, the zeks laugh quietly among themselves: *It may have been said, but we'll manage to forget it!* The zeks inwardly consider themselves to be the superiors of their chiefs—both in literacy and in their mastery of work skills, and in their general level of comprehension of the circumstances of life. And one has to admit that that is how it often is, but here in their self-satisfaction: the zeks fail to see that, on the other hand, the administration of the islands possesses a *permanent* superiority over the natives by virtue of its *world outlook*. That is why the naïve concept of the zeks that the chiefs' principles are *I do as I please!* or *The law here is me!* is really quite unfounded.

However, this gives us a convenient opportunity to draw a distinction between the native status and the Old Russian serfdom. The serf-peasant did not like his nobleman-owner, and made fun of him, but had grown accustomed to feeling something superior in him, as a result of which there was a multitude of characters like Savelich and Firs who were dedicated slaves. But now this spiritual slavery has ended once and for all. And among the tens of millions of zeks it is quite impossible to imagine even one who sincerely worships his chief.

And in this respect there is an important national difference between the zeks and your and my compatriots, dear reader:

The zeks do not strive for praise, nor for honorary diplomas, nor to have their names posted on Red Bulletin Boards of Honor (unless these are directly tied in with supplementary rations). Everything that is called the glory of labor out in freedom is for the zeks, in their stupidity, only a dull and hollow sound. In this they are all the more independent of their guardians and of the necessity to please.

As a generalization, the entire *scale of values* is topsy-turvy among the zeks, but this need not surprise us if we recall that it is always that way among savages: for a tiny little mirror they are willing to part with a big fat pig; for cheap little beads, with a basket of cocoa beans. Those things that are precious to us, dear reader, such as ideological values, self-sacrifice, dedication, and the desire to labor selflessly for the future, these are not only quite absent among the zeks but are even considered worthless. It is enough to say that the zeks are *totally deprived of patriotic sentiment* and do not like their own native islands in the least. Let us recall the words of their own folk song:

Be thou damned, O Kolyma!
Snakes invented this planet!

Because of this they rarely undertake long and risky journeys in search of happiness, which are called, in their dialect, *escapes*.

Most highly esteemed of all among the zeks, occupying first place in terms of the value placed on it, is the *bread ration*—a piece of black bread with additives in it, badly baked, which you and I would be unwilling to eat. And among the zeks the bigger and heavier the ration is, the more precious it is. Anyone who has ever seen the greed with which the zeks hurl themselves on their morning bread ration, almost devouring their hands along with it, will have a difficult time ever erasing that unaesthetic recollection from his mind. Second place among them is occupied by makhorka, or home-grown tobacco, and the rates of exchange involving these things are wildly arbitrary, and don't pay the least heed to the amount of socially useful labor invested in the one or the other. This is all the more monstrous in that among them makhorka occupies the place, so to speak, of a universal currency. (There is no monetary system on the islands.) Third place is occupied by gruel (which is an island soup without fats, without meat, without grits or vegetables, in accordance with native customs). Probably even the marching of grenadiers

on parade, in exact step with one another, in gleaming uniforms and flourishing weapons, does not leave such a fearsome impression on the viewer as does the evening entry of a brigade of zeks into the mess hall to get their gruel—those shaven heads, those slapdash caps, tatters tied together with strings, those mean crooked faces (how do they get those muscles and sinews from that gruel?). And in they go, with twenty-five pairs of shoes and rope and bast sandals—tup-tup, tup-tup, left, right, *give us our ration, bosses!* Anyone who's not of our faith, get out of the way! And on the twenty-five faces at the moment of seizing their prey the *national character* of the zeks is disclosed to you distinct and clear.

We note the fact that in reaching conclusions about the zeks we can hardly imagine them as individuals, their separate personalities and names. But that is not a fault of our method. It is a reflection of that *herd structure of life* in which this outlandish people lives, renouncing family life and the creation of heirs, which are so traditional among other peoples. (They are convinced that their population will be replenished by other means.) This collective way of life is extremely characteristic of the Archipelago—be it an inheritance from primitive society or the dawn of the future. Probably it is the future.

The next most highly valued thing among the zeks is sleep. A normal human being can only be astounded at how much a zek is capable of sleeping and in what varied circumstances. One hardly need say that insomnia is quite unknown among them. They take no sleeping pills. They sleep every night through without waking. And if they happen to get a day free of work, they sleep right through it. It has been reliably established that they are able to fall asleep when seated beside empty hand barrows while the latter are being loaded. They are able to fall asleep out at line-up with their legs spread wide apart, and they are also able to fall asleep even when marching under guard to work, but not all of them—some of them keel over and wake up. And the basis of all this is: during sleep the *sentence* passes more quickly. And, in addition: *the night is for sleep, and the day is for rest!*[6]

Let us return to the image of the brigade stamping in to get

6. It is paradoxical, but the Russian people have similar proverbs: "I eat while I'm marching, and sleep while I'm standing." "Where there's a nook or cranny there's a bed."

its "lawful" (as they call it) gruel. We see an expression here of one of the principal national traits of the zek people—*vital drive.* (Nor does this contradict their inclination to keep dropping off to sleep. That is, in fact, why they sleep, so as to have the strength for their drive in the interim!) This drive is both literal and physical, and continues right up to the finish line of their goals—food, a warm stove, a clothes drier, shelter from the rain. And in all that pushing and shoving the zek does not hesitate to stick his shoulder in his neighbor's side. And if two zeks are going to pick up a tree trunk, both of them head for the top end, so that the other will get the thick end. And this drive exists in a more general sense—a drive to get the most advantageous position in life. In the cruel island conditions (so close to the conditions of life in the animal kingdom that we can without fear of contradiction apply here the Darwinian "struggle for life"*) life itself often depends on success or failure in the struggle for a place—and in driving a path for oneself at the cost of others, the natives acknowledge no restraining ethical principles. They themselves say straight out: *"Conscience? It got left in my case file."* In taking vital decisions they are guided by the well-known rule of the Archipelago: *It is better to be a son-of-a-bitch than to suffer.*

But this drive can be successful only if it is accompanied by practical agility and resourcefulness in the most difficult situations.[7] The zek has to manifest this quality every day, for the simplest and the most insignificant purposes: to safeguard his pitiful dregs of property—some dented mess tin, stinking rags, a wooden spoon, his handy needle. However, in the struggle for an important position in the island hierarchy—even this resourcefulness must become calculated *trickery* of a superior, more subtle, more ingenious order. So as not to weigh down this inquiry—here is one example. A certain zek managed to secure the important position of chief of the camp workshops. Certain kinds of work were successfully carried out in his workshops, and others not, but the strength of his position depended not so much on the successful completion of his work as on his ability *to bluff.* Some MVD officers came to his office and saw some

7. The Russians say: "He bows with his front, watches out with his side, and feels his way with his rear."

ceramic cones on his desk. "What are they?" "Seger cones." "What are they for?" "To determine the temperature inside the ovens." "Aha!" drawled out the chief, thinking to himself: "Well, I certainly put a good engineer in the job." But those cones could not be used to determine temperatures through their melting point, because they weren't made of standardized clay and their composition was unknown. The cones started to become overfamiliar—and soon the chief of the workshops had a new toy on his desk—an optical instrument without a single lens (where in the Archipelago would you find a lens?). And again everyone was astounded.

And the zek's mind had continually to be occupied with such sideways feints as these.

According to the circumstances, and his psychological appraisal of the enemy, the zek had to demonstrate *flexibility of conduct*—ranging from a crude move with fist or voice up to the most delicate kind of pretense, from total shamelessness to sacred fidelity to a promise given face to face, which one would not think to be at all compulsory. (Thus for some reason all zeks were as faithful as saints to their promises of secret bribes and exceptionally patient and conscientious in carrying out private commissions. When we see some wonderful Archipelago handicraft work with carving and inlays, the likes of which can otherwise be seen only in the Ostankino Museum,* it is impossible to believe that this was done by those same hands which turned over to the foreman work that was held together only by a peg so that it would fall apart immediately.)

This flexibility of conduct was also reflected in the famous zek rule: *"If they give—take it; if they beat—beat it."*

The most important condition of success in the life struggle of the Gulag islanders is their *secretiveness.* Their character and their intentions are so profoundly hidden that to the inexperienced novice employer it seems at the outset as if the zeks bend like a blade of grass—beneath the wind and the boot.[8] (Only subsequently does he become bitterly convinced of the cunning and insincerity of the islanders.) Secretiveness is almost the most characteristic trait of the zek tribe. The zek has to hide his intentions and acts, both from the employers and from the jailers,

8. Compare the proverb of the Russians: "It is better to bend than to break."

and from the brigadiers and from the so-called "stoolies."[9] He has to conceal his successes so that they will not be outdone. He has to conceal his plans, his calculations, and his hopes, whether he be preparing for a big "escape" or has figured out where to collect shavings for a mattress. In the zek life it is always the case that to disclose means to lose. . . . One native, whom I treated to makhorka, explained it to me this way (I present it here in translation): "If you disclose a warm place to sleep where the foreman won't find you, everyone will rush there, and the foreman will smell it out. If you disclose that you have sent a letter out through a free person,[10] then everyone else will hand his letters to that free person, and they will catch him with the letters. And if the storeroom clerk has promised to exchange your torn shirt—shut up till you have exchanged it, and when you have, shut up some more: you won't give him away, and he will be useful to you later on."[11] With the years the zek becomes so accustomed to hiding everything that he no longer has to exert any effort at all to this end; the natural human desire to share what he has experienced dies in him. (Should we perhaps recognize in this secretiveness some sort of defense reaction against the *secret course of events* in general? After all, they also do all they can to conceal from him information concerning his own fate.)

The secretiveness of the zek flows also from his all-round *mistrustfulness*; he mistrusts everyone around him. An act that appears to be unselfish arouses his especially strong suspicion. *The law of the taiga*—that is how he formulates the highest imperative of human relationships. (On the islands of the Archipelago there really are great tracts of taiga.)

The native who in the highest degree combines and manifests these tribal qualities—the drive for life, pitilessness, resourcefulness, secretiveness, and mistrustfulness—calls himself, and is called by others, *a son of Gulag*. This, among them, is like the title "honorary citizen," and it is acquired, of course, through long years of life on the islands.

9. An insignificant phenomenon of the Archipelago upon which we consider it superfluous to dwell in this essay.

10. An official postal service does exist on the islands of the Archipelago, but the natives prefer not to make use of it.

11. Compare this proverb among the Russians: "If you have found something, shut up, and if you have lost something, shut up too." Frankly speaking, the parallelism of these rules of life leave us somewhat puzzled.

A son of Gulag believes himself impenetrable, and also that he, on the contrary, can see right through those around him and, as the phrase goes, six feet beneath them too. Maybe this is so, but at this point it becomes apparent that even the most penetrating of the zeks possesses a narrow range of outlook, a *short view* ahead. While judging very soberly actions close to them, and while very precise in calculating their behavior in the hours immediately ahead, the rank-and-file zeks and even the sons of Gulag, too, are incapable either of thinking abstractly or of grasping phenomena of a general nature, or even of speaking about the future. Even in their grammar the future tense is very rarely used; even with regard to the morrow it is applied with a conditional nuance—and still more carefully to the subsequent days of the same week, and you will never hear from a zek such a sentence as "Next spring I will . . ." Because they all know that they still have to make it through the winter, and that any day fate can hurl them from one island to another. In real truth: "My day is my epoch!"

The sons of Gulag are also the chief bearers of the traditions and the so-called *zek commandments.* On the various islands the number of these commandments varies, and they are not always formulated the same way either. And to work toward their systematization would be a very interesting subject for a separate inquiry. These commandments have nothing in common with Christianity. (The zeks are not only an atheistic people, but in general nothing is sacred to them, and they always hasten to ridicule and degrade anything lofty. And this, too, is reflected in their language.) But as the sons of Gulag affirm: If you live according to their commandments, you will not perish in the Archipelago.

There are certain precepts, such as: *Don't squeal!* (How is one to understand this? Evidently they are desirous of avoiding superfluous noise?) And: *Don't lick the bowls*; in other words, do not descend to slops, something they consider a swift and abrupt way to die. And: *Don't scavenge.* And others.

There is an interesting commandment: *Don't shove your nose in someone else's mess tin!* This seems to us to represent a great achievement of native thought; you see, this is the principle of negative freedom; it is the slogan "My home is my castle!" turned around, so to speak, and even improved upon, because it is a matter not of one's own mess tin but of someone else's (and yet

"one's own" is, of course, understood). Knowing the native conditions, we have to understand here the term "mess tin" in the broadest sense—not merely as a dented and sooty dish, nor even as the specific unappetizing dishwater contained in it, but also as all the means of getting something to eat, all the means in the struggle for existence, and even more broadly: as the zek's *soul.* In a word, "Let me live as I wish, and you live as you wish"—that is what this precept means. A hard and cruel son of Gulag, under this precept, undertakes the obligation not to use his strength and drive out of empty curiosity. (But at the same time he frees himself of any kind of moral obligation: "Even if you are croaking right next to me, it's none of my affair." This is a cruel law, yet it is much more humane than the law of the thieves——the island cannibals: "You today, me tomorrow." The cannibal-thief is not in the least indifferent to his neighbor; he will speed up the latter's death so as to put off his own or sometimes just for the hell of it or even for the amusement of watching it.)

Finally, there is one composite commandment: *Don't trust, don't fear, don't beg!* In this commandment the common, national character of the zek is cast, like a piece of sculpture, with sharp definition.

How can one (in freedom) rule over a people which is totally steeped in such a proud commandment? It is awesome even to think of it!

This commandment leads us to consider not so much the life style of the zeks as their psychological essence.

The first thing we note from the start in a son of Gulag, and then observe more and more frequently, is *spiritual equilibrium,* psychological stability. In this regard the zek's general, overall philosophical view of his place in the universe is highly interesting. As distinct from the Englishman or the Frenchman, who is proud all his life of having been born an Englishman or a Frenchman, the zek is not at all proud of his national affiliation; on the contrary, he perceives it as a cruel trial, but a trial he wishes to endure with dignity. The zeks have a particularly notable myth, which holds that somewhere there exist "the gates of the Archipelago" (compare with the pillars of Hercules in antiquity), and that on the outside of these gates there is a sign for those who enter: "DO NOT LOSE HEART!" And on the other side there is a sign for those who are leaving: "DO NOT BE OVERJOYED!" And

the main thing, the zeks add, is that these signs are visible only to the wise, and fools do not see them. Often this myth is expressed as a simple rule of life: *"Newly arriving, do not be sad; newly departing, do not be glad."* It is in this key that the views of the zeks on the Archipelago and on the life taking place in the space abutting on it must be perceived. Such a philosophy is the source of the zek's psychological stability. No matter how darkly circumstances may be stacked against him, he knits the brows of his rough and weathered face and says: *"They cannot drop me any deeper than a mine."* Or they comfort each other: *"It could be worse."* And in reality, this conviction "It could be even worse!" clearly supports and encourages them in the most profound suffering of famine, cold, and spiritual depression.

The zek is always *expecting it to be worse.* That is how he lives, constantly awaiting the blows of fate and stings of the evil spirit. And, on the other hand, he perceives every temporary relaxation as an oversight, a mistake. In this constant expectation of misfortune the austere soul of the zek matures, stoically hardened to its own fate, and pitiless toward the fates of others.

The zek's deviations from his state of equilibrium are very minor—either on the dark side or the bright side, either on the side of despair or on the side of happiness.

This was felicitously expressed by Taras Shevchenko (who spent a little time on the islands in prehistoric times): "I now have almost neither grief nor gladness. On the other hand, there is a moral calm like the cold-bloodedness of a fish. Is it possible that constant suffering can rework a human being in this way?"[12]

Indeed! Yes. Indeed it can. A *stable, indifferent state of mind* is the zek's indispensable defense so he can survive long years of grim island life. If he does not attain this smoldering, lusterless state of mind in his first year in the Archipelago, ordinarily he dies. Once he has attained it, he continues to live. In a word: If you don't kick the bucket—you'll become an adept.

All the zek's feelings are dulled, and his nerves coarsened. Having become indifferent to his own grief, and to the punishments which the guardians of the tribe have laid upon him, and even, by then, almost to his whole life—he does not experience any spiritual sympathy for the grief of those around him either.

12. In a letter to Repnina.

Somebody's outcry of pain or even women's tears barely compel him to turn his head—so dulled have his reactions become. Often the zeks show no mercy to inexperienced newcomers and laugh at their errors and misfortunes—but do not judge them severely for this: they are not doing it out of malice—their sympathies have simply atrophied, and all that remains noticeable to them is the funny side of events.

The most prevalent world outlook among them is *fatalism.* This is their profound, universal trait. It is to be explained by their dependent situation, their total lack of knowledge of what will happen to them even in the most immediate future, and their actual inability to influence events. Fatalism is even necessary to the zek because it confirms him in his spiritual stability. The son of Gulag believes that the most tranquil course is to put his faith in fate. The future is a cat in a sack, a pig in a poke, and not understanding it clearly, and having no idea what's going to happen to you in the possible variations of life lying ahead, you don't need to strive too insistently for something or reject something too obstinately—be it a transfer to another barracks, or brigade, or camp. Maybe it will be for the better, maybe for the worse, but you are free of self-reproaches; let it be worse for you, but it wasn't done by your own hands. And this is how you preserve that precious feeling of dauntlessness, how you save yourself from fussing and ingratiating.

Given such a dark fate, the zeks have many strong *superstitions.* One of them is closely bound up with their fatalism: If you worry too much about your conditions or even your own comfort, you are bound to *get burned by a prisoner transport.*[13]

The fatalism widely prevalent among them extends not only to their personal fate but also to the overall course of things. The last thing in their mind is that *the overall course* of events could be changed. They imagine that the Archipelago has existed *for all eternity* and that earlier it was even worse.

But probably the most interesting psychological twist here is the fact that the zeks perceive their own stable state of equanimity in these primitive and wretched circumstances as a victory for

13. *Fires* in their literal sense don't frighten the zeks. They don't value the shelters they live in, and they don't even try to save burning buildings, since they are certain that they will always be replaced. *To get burned* is a phrase used only in the sense of their personal fate.

love of life. It is quite enough for the sequence of misfortunes to slow down a little, for the blows of fate to slacken just a little, for the zek to express his *satisfaction with life* and take pride in his own conduct in it. Perhaps the reader will find it easier to believe in this paradoxical trait if we cite Chekhov. In his story "In Exile," the boatman Semyon Tolkovy expresses this feeling as follows:

> I . . . have brought myself to the point where I can sleep naked on the earth and eat grass. *And may God grant everyone a life like that.* [Our italics.] I need nothing, and I fear no one, and I understand myself so well that no man is richer and freer than I.

These astonishing words still ring in our ears; we have heard them many times from zeks of the Archipelago. (And the only surprise is, where could Chekhov have picked them up?) "And may God grant everyone a life like that!" How would you like that?

Up to the present, we have been speaking of the positive aspects of the national character. But we cannot shut our eyes to its negative aspects, to certain touching national weaknesses which seem to stand as exceptions and contradictions of the foregoing.

The more dauntless and stern the disbelief of this atheistic people (which, for example, completely ridicules the Gospel teaching which says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," holding that judgments—in other words, sentences—don't depend on that), the more feverishly is it afflicted nonetheless by attacks of thoughtless gullibility. Here one can draw a distinction: Within that closely circumscribed field of vision where the zek can see well, he believes in nothing. But deprived of an abstract vision, deprived of historical perspective, he swallows with the innocence of a savage any farfetched rumor, any native miracles.

An ancient example of native *trustfulness* was the hope placed in Gorky's arrival on Solovki. But there isn't any need to go that far back. There is an almost permanent and almost universal religion in the Archipelago; this is faith in the so-called *Amnesty.* It is difficult to explain just what this is. It is not the name of a goddess, as the reader might have thought. It is something akin to the Second Coming among Christian peoples, it is a burst of such blinding radiance that the ice of the Archipelago will melt

and even the islands themselves will dissolve, and all the natives will be swept on warm waves to sunny regions where they will immediately find their nearest and most beloved. Probably this is a somewhat transformed faith in the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. This faith, which has never yet been confirmed by one single real miracle, is nonetheless very much alive and persistent. And just as other peoples connect their important rituals with the winter and summer solstices, so, too, the zeks mystically await (always in vain) the first days of November and May. If a south wind blows on the Archipelago, they will immediately whisper from ear to ear: "There's bound to be an amnesty! It is already under way!" And when the winter winds set in in earnest, the zeks warm their numbed fingers by breathing on them, rub their ears, stamp up and down, and encourage one another. "That means there will be an amnesty. Otherwise we'll freeze to ———! [Here there is an untranslatable expression.] Evidently it's going to come now."

The harmfulness of every religion has long since been demonstrated and proved—and we see the same thing here too. These beliefs in Amnesty seriously weaken the natives, inducing in them an uncharacteristic state of dreaminess, and there are periods of epidemic when necessary and urgent government work quite literally falls from the zeks' hands—which, practically speaking, is the same effect as that produced by the opposite kind of rumor about "prisoner transports." For everyday construction work it is much more advantageous for the natives not to experience any ups and downs of feeling.

And the zeks also suffer from a certain national weakness, which in some incomprehensible fashion they retain despite the whole structure of their life. This is their *secret thirst for justice*.

Chekhov, too, observed this strange feeling on an island which, in fact, did not belong to our Archipelago at all: "The hard-labor prisoner, no matter how profoundly depraved and unjust he himself was, loved justice above all, and if it was not to be found among the people placed over him, then year after year he fell into a state of anger, into extreme mistrust."

Even though Chekhov's observations do not in any respect refer to our case, yet they astonish us with their accuracy.

Beginning with the zeks' arrival in the Archipelago, every day and every hour of their life here is one continual injustice, and

in this situation they themselves commit only injustices—and one would think it had long since been time for them to grow used to it and to accept injustice as the universal norm of life. But no, not at all! Every injustice on the part of the elders in the tribe and the tribal guardians continues to wound them, and to wound them just as much as it did on their first day. (But injustice which rises from the bottom to the top provokes their hearty and approving laughter.) And in their folklore they do not create legends so much about justice as, in an exaggeration of this feeling, about unjustified magnanimity. (And thus it was that the myth about magnanimity to F. Kaplan was created and lasted for decades in the Archipelago—alleging that she had not been shot but confined for life in various prisons, and there were even many witnesses to be found who had been with her on prisoner transports or had received books from the Butyrki Prison library from her.[14] One asks why the natives needed this nonsensical myth. Only as an extreme case of inordinate magnanimity in which they wanted to believe. They then in their mind's eye could apply it to themselves.)

Instances are also known of a zek's coming to love his work in the Archipelago (A. S. Bratchikov: "I am proud of what I made with my own hands"), or at least not disliking it (the zeks of German origin), but these cases are so exceptional that we are not going to offer them even as an eccentricity, let alone a universal trait of the people.

And let not the already cited native trait of secretiveness seem in contradiction with another native trait: *a love of telling stories about the past.* Among all backward peoples this is a custom of the old men; and people of middle age actively dislike talking about the past and are even afraid to (particularly women, and particularly people filling out security questionnaires, yes, and in general everyone). In this regard the zeks behave like a nation

14. Not long ago the Commandant of the Kremlin, Comrade Malkov, officially repudiated these rumors and described how he had shot Kaplan at the time. And Demyan Bedny was present at the execution too. And her absence as a witness at the trial of the SR's in 1922 ought to have convinced the zeks! But they don't remember that trial at all. We suppose that the rumor about the life imprisonment of F. Kaplan arose from the life imprisonment of Berta Gandal. This woman, suspecting nothing, arrived in Moscow from Riga on the very day of the attempted assassination of Lenin, when the brothers Gandal (who had been waiting in an automobile for Kaplan) were shot. And that was why Berta got life imprisonment.

consisting only of old men. (In another respect—since they have *instructors*—they are, on the contrary, maintained like a nation of children.) You wouldn't be able to squeeze a word out of them about the petty secrets of today's daily life—such as where to warm up one's mess tin, or who's got makhorka to barter—but they will tell you everything about the past without concealment, disclosing everything: how they lived before the Archipelago and with whom and how they *got here.* (For hours at a time they listen to stories of how other zeks "got here," and they are never bored in the least by these monotonously similar stories.) And the more accidental, the more superficial, the briefer the encounter between two zeks (one night next to each other in a transit prison), the more extended and detailed are their hurried accounts of themselves to one another.

It is very interesting at this point to draw comparisons with Dostoyevsky's observations. He noted that each prisoner bore silently and suffered out within himself the story of how he got into the "House of the Dead"—and found it was not acceptable among them to talk about it. This is something we can understand: people got put in the "House of the Dead" for *crime*; and for those hard-labor prisoners it was hard to think back on it.

The zek gets to the Archipelago by an inexplicable move of fate or by an evil concatenation of vengeful circumstances—but in nine cases out of ten he doesn't feel he has committed any "crime"—and therefore there are no stories in the Archipelago more interesting, and none which arouse a livelier sympathy in the audience, than those of *"how I got here."*

The zeks' abundant stories about the past, which filled all the evenings in their barracks, had another purpose and meaning as well. The more uncertain the zek's present and future, the more unshakable is his past. No one can ever take his past away from the zek, and everyone was something bigger in the past than he is now in the Archipelago (since it is impossible to be lower than a zek, and even a drunken tramp outside the Archipelago is addressed as *Comrade*). And in his recollections, therefore, the zek's self-esteem reclaims those peaks from which life has toppled him.[15] His recollections are, in addition, invariably embellished,

15. And the self-esteem of an old deaf tinker or of a pipsqueak boy painter's apprentice in no way yields to that of a celebrated theater director of the metropolis.

and invented (but extremely plausible) episodes are inserted in them. And the zek storyteller (and his listeners) feel a life-giving *return of self-confidence.*

This self-confidence is strengthened in another way too—by multitudinous folk tales about the cleverness and luck of the zek people. These are rather crude stories, recalling the soldiers' legends of the times of Tsar Nicholas I (when soldiers were conscripted for twenty-five years). They will tell you how a certain zek went to the chief to split wood for the kitchen—and how the chief's daughter ran out to him in the woodshed. Or how a sly orderly made a crawl hole underneath the barracks and put a pot under the drain in the floor of the parcel room. (There was sometimes vodka in parcels from outside, but there was a prohibition law on the Archipelago, and, with due documentation, they were supposed to pour out all the vodka right on the ground—but they never ever did pour it out—and so this duty orderly supposedly collected it in his pot and was always drunk.)

In general, the zeks value and love *humor*—and this is best evidence of all of the healthy psychological state of those natives who manage not to die during their first year. They proceed on the theory that tears will not justify you nor laughter get you into debt. Humor is their constant ally, without which, very likely, life in the Archipelago would be totally impossible. They value curses, too, particularly for their humor; the funnier they are, the more convincing to them. Their every reply to a question, their every judgment about their surroundings, is spiced with at least a mite of humor. Ask a zek how much time he has spent already in the Archipelago and he will not tell you, "Five years," but, instead, "Well, I've sat through five Januarys."

(For some reason they refer to their stay in the Archipelago as *sitting*, even though they spend least of all their time sitting.)

"Is it hard?" you ask him.

"Only the first ten years," he replies mockingly.

And if you sympathize with him because he has to live in such a difficult climate, he will reply: "The climate's bad, but the company's good."

And they will say about someone who has left the Archipelago: "They gave him three, he sat out five, and they released him ahead of time."

And when prisoners began to arrive in the Archipelago with

excursion tickets for twenty-five years: "Now you'll be looked after for the next twenty-five years."

And in general the zeks talk this way about the Archipelago: "Whoever hasn't been there yet . . . will get there, and whoever has been there . . . won't forget it."

(This is a case of an unlawful generalization; you and I, reader, do not intend to go there at all, right?) And wherever and whenever the natives hear someone ask *to be given more* of something (even if only hot water in a mug), they all immediately shout in a chorus: "The prosecutor *will give you more!*"

(In general, the zeks have an incomprehensible hostility toward prosecutors, and it frequently bursts out. For example, in the Archipelago the unjust expression is widespread: "The prosecutor is a chopper."

Beyond its exact rhyme, in Russian,* we do not see any meaning in this phrase. With deep regret we have to note here a case of the split between associative and causative connections which reduces the zek's thought processes below the average level common to all mankind. We will have more to say about this anon.)

Here are some additional examples of their cute, good-natured jokes:

"He sleeps and sleeps, but has no time for rest."

"If you don't drink your water, where will you get your strength?"

At the end of the working day (when the zeks are already exhausted and waiting for knocking-off time) they invariably joke about the detested work: "Well, the work just got going, but the day is too short."

And in the morning, instead of setting about work, they go from place to place and say: "The night should come sooner, so tomorrow [!] we could go to work!"

And here is where we see the *gaps in their logic*. There is a well-known native expression: "We didn't plant that forest, so we won't cut it down."

But if one reasons that way, the logging camps didn't plant the forest either, yet they cut them down very successfully indeed! So what we have here is a childishness typical of the native way of thought, an idiosyncratic form of dadaism.

Or here again, from the time of the Belomor Canal: "Let the bears do the work."

Well, how, speaking seriously, can one imagine a bear digging the great canal? The question of bears' working was adequately treated in the works of I. A. Krylov. If there were the slightest possibility of harnessing bears for useful work—do not doubt that it would have been done in recent decades and we would have whole bear brigades and labor camps for bears.

True, the natives have a parallel expression about bears, which is highly unjust but caustic: "The chief is a bear."

We cannot even understand what association of ideas could give rise to such an expression. We would not like to think so ill of the natives as to combine the two expressions and draw a conclusion on that basis.

Going on to the question of the zeks' *language*, we find ourselves in somewhat of a quandary. Without even mentioning the fact that each study of a newly discovered language always calls for a separate book and a special scientific course, there are specific difficulties in our case.

One of them is the . . . agglomerative combination of language with cursing, to which we have already referred. No one could possibly separate them (because one cannot divide a living thing!).[10] But at the same time we are restrained from setting down everything as it is in these scholarly pages out of concern for the morals of our young people.

There is another difficulty—the necessity of precisely distinguishing the language of the zek people from the language of the tribe of cannibals (otherwise known as the "thieves," the crooks) scattered among them. The language of the tribe of cannibals is a completely separate branch of the philological tree, which has nothing like it or akin to it. This subject is worthy of a separate inquiry, and we would only be confused by the incomprehensible cannibal lexicon (with such words as: "ksiva" —a document; "marochka"—handkerchief; "ugol"—suitcase; "lukovitsa"—a watch; or "prokhorya"—boots). But the problem is that there are other lexicographical elements of the cannibal

16. Only recently a certain Stalevskaya from the village of Dolgoderevenskoye of Chelyabinsk Province found a way: "Why did you not struggle for the purity of the language? Why did you not appeal *to the instructor for help in an organized way?*" This remarkable idea simply never crossed our minds when we were in the Archipelago; otherwise we would certainly have suggested it to the zeks.

language which have been taken over by the zek language and which have enriched it with their images:

"Svistet," meaning in Russian "to whistle, to sing," and in the zek language "to tell a lie, to shoot the bull"; "temnit," meaning in Russian "to darken, to obscure," and similarly in zek "to deceive, to confuse"; "raskidyvat chernukhu," meaning in Russian "to cast something black over," and in zek, similarly, "to deceive, to throw dust in one's eyes"; "kantovatsya," meaning in Russian "to be tipped over, turned upside down," and in zek "to loiter, loaf on the job, but slyly"; "lukatsya," meaning in Russian "to feel out," and in zek "to check out the action—but swiftly"; "filonit," meaning in zek "to be clever, to loaf"; "mantulit," which used to mean in Russian "to lick the plates of the master's table," and which now means in zek "to get stuck in, to slave away"; "tsvet," meaning in Russian "color," including skin color, and in zek "appertaining, belonging, to the Russian thieves' law"; "polusvet," meaning in Russian "half-breed, mulatto," and in zek "half-thief"; "dukhovoi," meaning in Russian "pertaining to the spirit" or "wind," as is wind instrument, and in zek "courageous, fearless, reckless"; "kondei," meaning in Russian and in zek "the cooler, the punishment block"; "shmon," meaning in zek "a frisk, a body search"; "kostyl," meaning "a crutch" in Russian, and in zek "the bread ration"; "fitil," meaning "a wick" in Russian, and in zek "a prisoner worn down and dying"; "shestyorka," meaning in Russian something with "six elements" or scoring "six points," and in zek "someone working for the camp administration or for the thieves or trusties"; "sosalovka," meaning in Russian "something sucked on or which sucks," and in zek "a starvation situation"; "otritsalovka," meaning in Russian "something which is a denial, a disclaimer," and in zek "a rejection of everything demanded by the camp chiefs," usually on the part of the central hard core of thieves; "s pontom," meaning in Russian "with the style of a card player who plays against the bank," and in zek very much the same, "bluffing but with braggadocio, with theatrics"; "gumoznitsa," meaning in zek "a prostitute, a camp lay"; "shalashovka," derived from the Russian "shalash," meaning "a lean-to shelter, a shack," and meaning in zek "a shack-up, a girl friend"; "batsilly," meaning in Russian "bacilli," and in zek "fats and oils"; "khilyat pod blatnogo," meaning in zek "to imitate the ways of the Russian thieves"; "zablatnitsya," meaning in zek "to take up the ways of the Russian thieves."

Many of these words, one must admit, possess precision, vividness, even a general comprehensibility. Their crowning glory, however, is the shout "Na tsirlakh!" This can be translated into Russian only by a complex description. To run or to serve something "na tsirlakh" means: "on tiptoe, and headlong, and with heartfelt zeal and eagerness"—and all of it simultaneously.

Now it seems clear to us that the contemporary Russian language is in real need of this expression—particularly because action of that kind is often encountered in life.

But such concern . . . is already, in fact, superfluous. The author of these lines, having completed his lengthy scientific journey through the Archipelago, was extremely worried about being able to return to his teaching in the ethnographic institute —not merely as regards his security clearance, but also as to whether he had fallen behind contemporary Russian language and whether the students would understand him all right. And suddenly, then and there, with astonishment and delight, he heard from the first-year students the very same expressions his ears had grown used to in the Archipelago and in which the Russian language had been so deficient till now: "s khodu," meaning "right away" or "with a rush" or "crashing on"; "vsyu dorogu," meaning "all the way, all the time"; "po novoy," meaning "once again"; "raskurochit," meaning "to rob, to clean out"; "zanachit," meaning "to stash, to swipe"; "frayer," meaning "a sucker" or "anyone not belonging to the thieves' law"; "durak i ushi kholodnye," meaning literally "a fool with cold ears—a hundred percent fool"; "ona s parnyami shyotsya," meaning literally "she gets herself sewed up with the boys, she makes out with the boys"; and many, many others!

What this indicates is the great energy of the zek language, which helps it to filter inexplicably into our country and first of all into the language of our young people. This offers the hope that in the future the process will accelerate and that all the words enumerated previously will also flow into the Russian language and will perhaps even be an ornament to it.

But this makes the task of the researcher even more difficult: to separate the Russian language and the zek language.

And then, too, conscientiousness prevents our bypassing a fourth difficulty: some primary and sort of prehistoric influence of the Russian language itself on the zek language, and even on the language of the cannibals (although now such an influence

cannot be observed). How otherwise can it be explained that we find in Dal's dictionary analogies to such specifically Archipelago expressions:

"*zhit zakonom*": literally "to live in the law," and meaning (in the Kostroma district) "to live with a wife" (in the Archipelago: "to live with her in the law").

"*vynachit*": "to fish out of a pocket," in the Russian peddlers' language. (And in the Archipelago they switched the prefix: "zanachit," "to steal.")

"*podkhodit*" meant "to become impoverished, to become fagged out." (Compare "*dokhodit*" in the Archipelago, "to get fagged out to the point of death, to be a dying man, a last-legger.")

Or one can consider the proverbs collected by Dal as well:

"Cabbage soup is good people"—and a whole series of island expressions: "*moroz chelovek*," meaning "a frost person," if he is not strong; "*kostyor chelovek*," literally "a bonfire person," etc.

And we also find in Dal: "He doesn't catch mice."[17]

And the word "suka" ("bitch") meant a "spy" or "stoolie" back in the times of P. F. Yakubovich.

And then there is that remarkable expression of the natives "*to dig your horns in*" (referring to every kind of work stubbornly executed and in general to all stubbornness, to standing up for yourself). And then too: "*to knock his horns down*" or "*to knock his horns off*," which restores to contemporary life precisely the ancient Russian and Slavonic meaning of the word "horns"—conceit, haughtiness, disdain—despite the phrase borrowed and translated from the French, "put horns on" someone —describing a wife's unfaithfulness—a phrase which never caught on among the ordinary people and which even the Russian intelligentsia would have forgotten had it not been bound up with Pushkin's duel.

And all these innumerable difficulties force us for the time being to put off the linguistic portion of our inquiry.

In conclusion, a few personal lines. The zeks at first shied away from the author of this essay when he questioned them;

17. Dal, *op. cit.*, p. 357.

they supposed that these inquiries were being conducted for the benefit of the "godfather" (a guardian spiritually close to them; to whom, however, as to all their guardians, they are ungrateful and unjust). When they became convinced that this was not the case, and after they had been plied with makhorka to smoke from time to time (they do not smoke expensive varieties), they adopted a kindly attitude toward the researcher, disclosing their unspoiled inner natures. In some places they even began in a friendly way to nickname the researcher "Dill Tomatovich" and in others "Fan Fanych." It has to be pointed out that patronymics are not employed at all in the Archipelago, and that therefore this form of respectful address bore a humorous character. Simultaneously it expressed how inaccessible to their intellect was the meaning of this study.

The author considers that the present inquiry has succeeded and that his hypothesis has been fully proved, namely, that in the middle of the twentieth century a completely new nation has been discovered, unknown to anyone before; with the ethnic scope of many millions of people.

Chapter 20

■

The Dogs' Service

The title of this chapter was not intended as an intentionally scathing insult, but it is our duty to uphold the camp tradition. If you think about it, they themselves chose this lot: their service is the same as that of guard dogs, and their service is connected with dogs. And there even exists a special statute on service with dogs, and there are whole officers' committees which monitor the *work* of an individual dog, fostering *a good viciousness* in the dog. And if the maintenance of one pup for a year costs the people 11,000 pre-Khrushchev rubles (police dogs are fed better than prisoners),[1] then the maintenance of each officer must cost even more.

And then throughout this book we have also had the difficulty of knowing what to call them in general. "The administration," "the chiefs," are too generalized and relate to freedom as well, to the whole life of the whole country, and they are shopworn terms anyway. "The bosses"—likewise. "The camp managers"? But this is a circumlocution that only demonstrates our impotence. Should they be named straightforwardly in accordance with camp tradition? That would seem crude, profane. It would be fully in the spirit of the language to call them *lagershchiki*—"camp keepers"; this distinguishes them every bit as well from the "lagernik"—"camp inmate"—as does "tyuremshchik"—"prison keeper"—from "tyuremnik"—"prison inmate." And it expresses an exact and unique sense: those who manage and govern the

1. All this about the dogs comes from Metter's novella "Murat," *Novy Mir*, No. 6, 1960.

camps. And so, asking forgiveness of my stricter readers for this new word (and it is not entirely new if a vacant spot was left for it in the language), I shall from now on make use of it from time to time.

And that is what this chapter is about: the "camp keepers" (and the "prison keepers" with them). We could begin with the generals—and it would be a marvelous thing to do—but we don't have any material. It was quite impossible for us worms and slaves to learn about them and to see them close up. And when we did see them, we were dazzled by the glitter of gold braid and couldn't make anything out.

So we really know nothing at all about the chiefs of Gulag who followed one another in turn—those tsars of the Archipelago. But if we come across a photo of Berman or a word or two of Apeter, we seize on it immediately. We know about those "Garanin executions"—but of Garanin himself we know nothing. All we do know is that he was not satisfied with simply signing; when he went around the camps, he was not loath to empty his Mauser into whatever mug he took a dislike to. We have written about Kashketin—but we never saw that Kashketin face to face. (Thank God!) We managed to collect a little material on Frenkel, but not on Zavenyagin. He, the recently deceased, escaped being buried with the henchmen of Yezhov and Beria. And the newspaper hacks wrote of him: "the legendary builder of Norilsk"! Did he lay bricks with his own hands? Realizing, however, that from up above Beria loved him dearly and that from down below him the MVD man Zinovyev spoke highly of him, we suppose he was an out-and-out beast. Otherwise he would not have built Norilsk. As for Antonov, the chief of the Yenisei Camp, we can be grateful that the engineer Pobozhy described him for us.[2] And we would advise everyone to read this portrayal: the unloading of lighters on the Taz River. In the depths of the tundra where the railroad has not yet extended. (Will it ever?) Egyptian ants are dragging locomotives across the snow, and up above, Antonov stands on a hill, watching over everything and setting them a time limit for unloading. He flew in by air and he is about to fly out by air immediately. His whole retinue dances around him. Napoleon had nothing like this—and his personal

2. *Novy Mir*, No. 8, 1964.

cook sets fresh tomatoes and cucumbers on a folding table right before him, in the midst of the Arctic permafrost. And the son-of-a-bitch shares with no one, shoving the whole lot into his own belly.

In this chapter we are going to cover those from colonel down. We'll chat a little about the officers and then go on to the sergeants, briefly cover the infantry guard—and that will be it. Let anyone who has noted more than we did write down more. Our limitation is this: when you are confined in prison or in camp, the personality of the prison keepers interests you only to the extent that it helps you evade their threats and exploit their weaknesses. As far as anything else is concerned, you couldn't care less. They are unworthy of your attention. You are suffering yourself, and those around you who are unjustly imprisoned are suffering, and in comparison with that sheaf of sufferings, which is too much for your outspread hands to encompass, what are these stupid people in their watchdog jobs to you? What are their petty interests to you, their worthless likes and dislikes, their successes and failures in the service?

And then later, too late, you suddenly realize that you didn't observe them closely enough.

Without even discussing the question of talent, can a person become a jailer in prison or camp if he is capable of the very least kind of useful activity? Let us ask: On the whole, can a camp keeper be a good human being? What system of moral selection does life arrange for them? The first selection takes place on assignment to the MVD armies, MVD schools, or MVD courses. Every man with the slightest speck of spiritual training, with a minimally circumspect conscience, or capacity to distinguish good from evil, is instinctively going to back out and use every available means to avoid joining this dark legion. But let us concede that he did not succeed in backing out. A second selection comes during training and the first service assignment, when the bosses themselves take a close look and eliminate all those who manifest laxity (kindness) instead of strong will and firmness (cruelty and mercilessness). And then a third selection takes place over a period of many years: All those who had not visualized where and into what they were getting themselves now come to understand and are horrified. To be constantly a weapon of violence, a constant participant in evil! Not everyone can bring

himself to this, and certainly not right off. You see, you are trampling on others' lives. And inside yourself something tightens and bursts. You can't go on this way any longer! And although it is belated, men can still begin to fight their way out, report themselves ill, get disability certificates, accept lower pay, take off their shoulder boards—anything just to get out, get out, get out!

Does that mean the rest of them have got used to it? Yes. The rest of them have got used to it, and their life already seems normal to them. And useful too, of course. And even honorable. And some didn't have to get used to it; they had been that way from the start.

Thanks to this process of selection one can conclude that the percentage of the merciless and cruel among the camp keepers is much higher than in a random sample of the population. And the longer, the more constantly, and the more notably a person serves in the *Organs*, the more likely it becomes that he is a scoundrel.

We do not lose sight of the lofty words of Dzerzhinsky: "Whoever among you has become hardened, whose heart cannot respond sensitively and attentively to those who suffer imprisonment—get out of this institution!" However, we cannot relate these words in any way to reality. Who was this meant for? And how seriously? Considering that he defended Kosyrev? (Part I, Chapter 8.) And who paid any attention to it? Neither "terror as a means of persuasion," nor arrests on the grounds of "unreliability," nor the executions of hostages, nor those early concentration camps fifteen years before Hitler . . . give us the slightest feeling of those sensitive hearts or those knights in shining armor. And if some did leave the Organs *themselves*, on their own in those years, then the ones Dzerzhinsky invited to stay could not help but grow hardened. And whoever became hardened or was hard to begin with stayed. (And maybe a different kind of advice was given on another occasion, but we simply don't have the quotations.)

How adhesive are those fashionable expressions which we are inclined to take over and use without thinking or checking them! *An old Chekist!* Who has not heard these words, drawled with emphasis, as a mark of special esteem? If the zeks wish to distinguish a camp keeper from those who are inexperienced,

inclined to fuss, who shout pointlessly and do not have a bulldog grip, they say: "And the chief there is an o-o-old Chekist!" (Like that major who burned Klempner's sonata about shackles.) The Chekists themselves were the ones who put this term into circulation, and we repeat it without thinking. "An old Chekist"—what that means at the least is that he was well regarded under Yagoda, Yezhov, and Beria. He was useful to them all.

But let us not digress and begin to talk about "Chekists in general." There has already been one chapter in this book on Chekists in the specific sense, the Chekists of the Security Operations–interrogation–gendarme persuasion. And the camp keepers merely like to call themselves Chekists, merely aspire to that title, or else have come here from those jobs for a rest—for a rest because here their nerves are not subject to such wear and tear and their health is not being undermined. Their work here does not require of them either that degree of development or that active pressure of evil demanded back there. In the Cheka-GB one must be sharp and quick and invariably hit the eye, but in the MVD it is enough to be dull and not miss the whole skull.

To our chagrin, we cannot undertake to explain why the slogan "the 'proletarianization' and the 'Communization' of camp personnel,"[3] which was successfully carried out, did not create in the Archipelago that fluttering love of man according to Dzerzhinsky. From the very earliest revolutionary years, in courses in the Central Penal Department and the provincial penal departments, the junior administrative staff (in other words, the internal custodial staff) trained for prisons and camps "without interrupting work" (in other words, on the job, already in prisons and camps). By 1925 only 6 percent of the Tsarist prison custodial staff remained (what hardened old servitors!). And even earlier the middle-rank camp command staff had become fully Soviet in composition. They continued to study: first at the *law* faculties of the People's Commissariat of Education (yes, the People's Commissariat of Education! And not faculties of lawlessness either, but of law!). From 1931 on these became the corrective-labor divisions of the law institutes of the People's Commissariat

3. And by October, 1923, the number of them in the R.S.F.S.R. was already twelve thousand, and by January 1, 1925, fifteen thousand. TsGAOR, collection 393, shelf 39, file 48, sheets 4 and 13; shelf 53, file 141, sheet 4.

of Justice in Moscow, Leningrad, Kazan, Saratov, and Irkutsk. The graduates were 70 percent workers in origin and 70 percent Communists! In 1928, by decree of the Council of People's Commissars and the never-objecting VTsIK, the powers over the prison regimen of these "proletarianized" and "Communized" chiefs of places of confinement were expanded still more.[4] Just imagine! Love of man somehow didn't happen! Many *more* millions of people suffered from them than from the Fascists—and they weren't POW's either, nor conquered peoples, but . . . their own compatriots, on their own native soil!

And who is going to explain that to us? We can't. . . .

Do a similarity of paths in life and a similarity of situations give rise to a similarity in characters? As a general thing it doesn't. For people with strong minds and spirits of their own it does not. They have their own solutions, their own special traits, and they can be very surprising. But among the camp keepers, who have passed through a severe negative-selection process—both in morality and mentality—the similarity is astonishing, and we can, in all likelihood, describe without difficulty their basic *universal* characteristics.

Arrogance. The camp chief lives on a separate island, flimsily connected with the remote external power, and on this island he is without qualification the first: all the zeks are abjectly subordinate to him, and all the free employees too. He has the biggest star on his shoulder boards of any there. No limits are set to his power, and it admits to no mistakes; every person complaining is always proven wrong (repressed). He has the best house on the island. The best means of transportation. The camp keepers immediately below him in rank are also raised extremely high. And since their whole preceding life has not given birth to any spark of critical capacity inside them, it is impossible for them to see themselves as other than a special race—of born rulers. Out of the fact that no one is capable of resisting them, they draw the conclusion that they rule very wisely, that this is their talent ("organizational"). Every day each ordinary event permits them visibly to observe their superiority: people rise before them, stand at attention, bow; at their summons people do not just approach

4. Vyshinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 421.

but run up to them; on their orders people do not simply leave but run out. And if he (Dukelsky of BAMlag) walks to the gates to watch the dirty rabble of his workers marching in a column surrounded by police dogs, he is the very image of a plantation owner—in a snow-white summer suit. And if they (Unzhlag) have taken it into their heads that they would like to ride out on horseback to inspect the work in the potato field, where women dressed in black are struggling and sinking into the mud up to their bellies, trying to dig potatoes (which, incidentally, were not removed in time and had to be plowed under in the spring for fertilizer), then these camp keepers are dressed up in gleaming jackboots and in faultless woolen uniforms as they, elegant horsemen, ride past their drowning female slaves like the original Olympians.

Stupidity always follows on the heels of smugness. Deified alive, each knows everything inside out, doesn't need to read or learn, and no one can tell him anything worth pausing over. Among the Sakhalin officials Chekhov met clever, energetic men, with scholarly leanings, who had studied the locality and local life thoroughly, and who had in fact written geographical and ethnographical studies. But even for a laugh it is impossible to imagine one such camp keeper in the whole Archipelago! And if Kudlaty, the chief of one of the Ust-Vym work parties, decided that the 100 percent fulfillment of state work norms was not 100 percent at all, and that instead what had to be fulfilled was his own daily norm (taken out of his head) and that otherwise he would put everyone on a penalty ration—there was no way to get him to change his mind. So, having fulfilled 100 percent, they all got penalty rations. In Kudlaty's office there were whole piles of volumes of Lenin. He summoned V. G. Vlasov and unctuously informed him: "Lenin writes what attitude one must take toward parasites." (He understood parasites to mean prisoners who had fulfilled the work norm by only 100 percent, and he understood by the term "proletariat" . . . himself. These two things fitted into their heads simultaneously: Here is my estate, and I am a proletarian.)

But the old serf-owning gentry were incomparably better educated; many of them had studied in St. Petersburg, and some of them even in Göttingen. From them, after all, came the Aksakovs, the Radishchevs, the Turgenevs. But no one ever

emerged from our MVD men, and no one ever will. And the main thing was that the serf owners either governed their estates themselves or at least understood a tiny little part of their estate operation. But the presumptuous MVD officers, with all kinds of state benefits showered on them, just could not take on themselves the additional burden of business management. They were too lazy for that and too stupid. And they wrapped their inane idleness in a fog of severity and secrecy. And, as it turned out, the state[5] was compelled to erect, alongside their whole gold-shoulder-boarded hierarchy, a second such hierarchy out of the trusts and combines.[6]

Autocracy. Autotyranny. In this respect the camp keepers were fully the equals of the very worst of the serf owners of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Innumerable are the examples of senseless orders, the sole purpose of which was to demonstrate their power. And the farther into Siberia and the North they were, the truer this was. But even in Khimki, just outside Moscow (today it's in Moscow), Major Volkov noticed on May 1 that the zeks were not cheerful. And he issued orders: "Everyone must cheer up immediately! Anybody I see unhappy will go off to the punishment block!" And to jolly up the engineers he sent third-termer girl thieves to sing them obscene ditties. People will say this was not tyranny but a political measure, so all right. They brought a prisoner transport to that same camp. One of the newcomers, Ivanovsky, was presented as a dancer of the Bolshoi Theatre. "What? A performer?" Volkov raged. "Twenty days in the punishment block! Go by yourself and report to the chief of the penalty isolator!" After some time had passed he telephoned: "Is the performer there?" "He is." "Did he come on his own?" "He did." "Well, then, let him out! I am appointing him assistant to the Commandant." (And that same Volkov, as we have already mentioned, ordered a woman's head shaved because she had beautiful hair.)

The surgeon Fuster, a Spaniard, did not play up to the camp chief. "Send him to the stone quarry." They did. Soon afterward the camp chief himself fell ill and needed an operation. There

5. The state is by no means always directed from the summit, as history well understands; it is very often the middle layer that, by its inertia, has determined the *non*development of the state.

6. But this didn't surprise anyone; what is there in our country, after all, which is *not* duplicated, beginning with the very power of the Soviets itself?

were other surgeons, and he could have gone to a central Moscow hospital, but no, he had faith only in Fuster! Bring him back from the quarry! "You are going to operate on me!" (But he died under the knife.)

And one camp chief made a real find: It turned out that a zek geological engineer, Kazak, possessed an operatic tenor voice. Before the Revolution he had studied in Petersburg with the Italian teacher Repetto. And the camp chief also discovered that he himself had a voice. It was 1941–1942 and the war was going on somewhere, but the camp chief was well protected from military service by his exemption, and he took singing lessons from his serf. The latter was sickly and dying, and was making inquiries in an effort to locate his wife, while his wife, O. P. Kazak, in exile, was trying to find her husband through Gulag. The search documents came together in the chief's hands, and he could have helped them re-establish communication. However, he did not do this. Why not? He "reassured" Kazak that his wife had been exiled but was living well. (Formerly a teacher, she worked first as a charwoman in the Grain Procurements Office and subsequently on a collective farm.) And he continued to take his singing lessons. And when, in 1943, Kazak was at death's door, the camp chief spared him, helped to get him released because of illness, and let him go to his wife to die. (So he was not really a vicious chief!)

A sense of possessing a patrimonial estate was typical of all camp chiefs. They perceived their camp not as a part of some state system but as a patrimonial estate entrusted them indivisibly for as long as they occupied their positions. Hence came all the tyranny over lives, over personalities, and hence also came the bragging among themselves. The chief of one of the Kengir camps said: "I've got a professor working in the baths!" But the chief of another camp, Captain Stadnikov, put him down with "And in my camp I've got an academician barracks orderly who carries out latrine barrels."

Greed and *money-grubbing*. Among the camp keepers this was the most *widespread* trait of all. Not every one was stupid, and not every one was a petty tyrant—but every last one was engaged in attempting to enrich himself from the free labor of the zeks and from state property, whether he was the chief in that camp or one of his aides. Neither I nor any one of my friends could

recollect any disinterested camp keeper, nor have any of the zeks who have been corresponding with me ever named one.

In their greed to grab as much as possible, none of their multitudinous legitimate monetary advantages and privileges could satisfy them. Neither high pay (with double and triple bonuses for work "in the Arctic," "in remote areas," "for dangerous work"). Nor prize money (provided management executives of camp by Article 79 of the Corrective Labor Code of 1933—that same code that did not hinder them from establishing a twelve-hour workday without any Sundays for the prisoners). Nor the exceptionally advantageous calculation of their seniority (in the North, where half the Archipelago was located, one year of work counted as two, and the total required for "military personnel" to earn a pension was twenty years; thus an MVD officer on completing MVD school at age twenty-two could retire on a full pension and go to live at Sochi at thirty-two!).

No! Yet every channel, meager or abundant, through which free services, food products, or objects could flow was always used by every camp keeper graspingly and gulpingly. Even back on Solovki the chiefs had begun to expropriate cooks, laundresses, stable boys, woodcutters from among the prisoners. And from then on there was never any end to (and from up above never any prohibition against) this profitable custom. So the camp keepers also took for themselves cattle herdsmen, gardeners, or teachers for their children. And in the years of the most strident outcry about equality and socialism, in 1933, for example, any free employee in BAMlag, for a minuscule payment to the camp cashier, could acquire a personal servant from among the prisoners. In Knyazh-Pogost "Aunt" Manya Utkina looked after the cow of the camp chief—and for this was rewarded with *a glass* of milk per day. And under the Gulag way of life this was real generosity. (And it would have been more likely in the Gulag way of life for that cow not to belong to the chief, but to be kept for "improving the diet of the sick"—but the milk would have kept on going to the chief.)

Not by the glass either, but by the pailful and the bagful, everyone who could possibly get fed off the rations of the prisoners did so on principle! Read over, dear reader, Lipai's letter in Chapter 9 above, the outcry, one would gather, of a former storeroom clerk. After all, it was not out of hunger, not out of

need, not out of poverty that those Kuragins, those Posuishapkas, those Ignatchenkos hauled out bags and barrels from the storeroom, but very simply thus: Why shouldn't they enrich themselves at the expense of the mute, defenseless, starving slaves? (And all the more so during wartime, when everyone else around was grabbing. Anyway, if you didn't live that way, everyone would laugh at you! I am not even going to make a special issue here of their betrayal of trusties who used to catch it because of the shortages.) And the Kolyma prisoners remember: Whoever was in a position to steal from the common food pot of the prisoners —the camp chief, the chief of regimen, the chief of the Cultural and Educational Section, the free employees, the duty jailers— all invariably stole. And the gatehouse guards . . . swiped sweetened tea at the gatehouse! Even just a spoonful of sugar, just so as to eat off the prisoners. What you take from a dying man is sweeter. . . .

The chiefs of the Cultural and Educational Sections are best not recalled. They were a big laugh. They all swiped, but it was all small-scale stuff (they were not permitted anything bigger). The chief of the KVCh would summon the storeroom clerk and give him a bundle—a pair of tattered cotton padded britches, wrapped up in a copy of *Pravda*. "Take them and bring me some new ones." And the chief of the KVCh in 1945–1946 at the Kaluga Gates Camp used to carry out of the compound a bundle of bits of firewood, gathered for him by the zeks on the construction project. (And he went through Moscow on a bus . . . in a greatcoat and with a bundle of bits of firewood—his wasn't such a sweet life either. . . .)

It was not enough for the camp bosses that both they and their families were clothed and shod by the camp craftsmen. (And once a special costume for a masquerade ball, a "dove of peace," was made for the fat wife of one camp chief in the camp workshops.) It was not enough for them that they had their own furniture manufactured there, as well as all other kinds of household supplies. It was not enough that they even had their shotgun pellets cast there (for poaching in the nearby game preserve). It was not enough for them that their pigs were fattened by the camp kitchen. It was too little! They were distinguished from the old serf owners because their power was not for a lifetime and not hereditary. And because of this difference the serf owners

did not have to steal from themselves, but the camp keepers had their heads occupied with one thing—how to steal something from their own enterprise.

I am sparing with examples so as not to encumber the exposition. The sullen hunchback Nevezhin never left our camp at the Kaluga Gates with empty hands, but used to walk out, just like that, in his long officer's greatcoat, carrying either a pail of linseed oil, or windowpanes, or putty, and all of it in quantities a thousand times exceeding the needs of any single family. And a paunchy captain, the chief of Camp 15 on Kotelnichesky Embankment, used to come each week in his passenger car for linseed oil and putty. (In postwar Moscow these were gold!) And all this had previously been stolen for them from the construction zone and taken into the camp compound—by those same zeks who had received ten years for a sheaf of straw or a packet of nails! But we Russians had long since *been reformed*, and become accustomed to how things were in our Motherland; and to us this only seemed funny. But here is how it was with the German POW's in the Rostov Camp! At night the chief of camp sent them to steal construction materials for him; he and the other chiefs were building houses for themselves. What could these submissive Germans make out of all this—when they knew that this same camp chief had had them court-martialed for taking a pot of potatoes and sentenced to ten or twenty-five years? The Germans figured it out: They went to the woman interpreter S. and supplied her with a document justifying their act, a declaration that on a certain date they were going to be compelled to go and steal. (And what they were building was railroad facilities, and because of the constant stealing of cement these were being built almost entirely of sand.)

Pay a visit nowadays to the home of the chief of the mine administration in Ekibastuz, D. M. Matveyev. (He is now in the mine administration because of the curtailment of Gulag, but he was chief of the Ekibastuz Camp from 1952 on.) His home is filled with paintings, carvings, and other things made for him for free, by the hands of natives.

Lasciviousness. This was not true of each and every one of them, of course, and it was closely tied to individual physiology. But the situation of camp chief and the absoluteness of his rights allowed harem inclinations full sway. The chief of the Burepolom

Camp, Grinberg, had each comely young woman brought to him immediately on arrival. (And what other choice did she have except death?) In Kochmes the camp chief Podlesny enjoyed nighttime roundups in the women's barracks (of the same sort we have already seen in Khovrino). He himself personally pulled the blankets off the women, allegedly searching for hidden men. In the presence of his beautiful wife he simultaneously bedded three zek mistresses. (And one day, having shot one of them out of jealousy, he shot himself.) Filimonov, the chief of the Cultural and Educational Department of all Dmitlag, was removed "for moral corruption" and sent to be reformed (in the very same position) to BAMlag. There he continued his heavy drinking and fornication on a formidable scale, and he promoted his mistress from the nonpolitical offenders . . . to be the chief of the Cultural and Educational Section. (His son, incidentally, joined up with some bandits and very soon afterward was himself imprisoned for banditry.)

Malice, cruelty. There was no curb, either practical or moral, to restrain these traits. Unlimited power in the hands of limited people always leads to cruelty. (And we cite here all this similarity in vices to those of the serf owners not merely for eloquent argument. This similarity, alas, demonstrates that the nature of our compatriots has not changed in the slightest in two hundred years; give as much power as that and there will be all the same vices!)

Tatyana Merkulova, a woman-beast, at the women's logging camp No. 13 of Unzhlag, rode on her horse among her female slaves like a savage plantation owner. Major Gromov, according to the recollections of Pronman, was actually ill on any day he had not imprisoned several prisoners in the punishment block. Captain Medvedev (Camp No. 3 of UstVymlag) stood in the watchtower himself for several hours each day and jotted down the names of the men who had gone into the women's barracks in order to follow up by imprisoning them. He loved always to have a full isolator. If the cells of the isolator were not packed full, he felt something lacking in his life. In the evening he loved to line up the zeks and read them such statements as "You have lost the game! There is never going to be any return to freedom for any of you, and don't dare to hope there will be." In that very same UstVymlag the chief of camp Minakov (a former

deputy chief of the Krasnodar Prison, who had served two years for exceeding his power in that prison, and who had already been readmitted to the Party) personally hauled from their bunks prisoners who refused to go out to work. Among them were thieves who began to put up a resistance, to brandish boards at him; and at that point he ordered all the window frames taken out of the barracks (at 13 degrees below zero Fahrenheit), and then he ordered pailfuls of water to be poured in through them.

All of them (including the natives) knew that the *telegraph lines stopped here!* The plantation owners also developed anger with a twist, in other words, what is called sadism. A prisoner transport was lined up in front of Shulman, the chief of the special section of Burepolom. He knew that this transport was going right out to general work. Nonetheless he could not deny himself the satisfaction of asking: "Are there any engineers? Raise your hands!" A dozen hands were raised above faces shining with hope. "Ah, so that's how it is! And maybe there are some academicians? *Pencils* will be brought you immediately!" And they brought in . . . crowbars. The chief of the Vilna colony, Lieutenant Karev, saw among the newcomers Junior Lieutenant Belsky (still in officer's boots and a tattered officer's uniform). Not long before, this person had been just such a Soviet officer as Karev, had worn just such shoulder boards. Did the sight of this tattered uniform arouse sympathy in Karev? Did he, at least, maintain an attitude of indifference? No, there was the desire to single him out for humiliation! And he ordered that Belsky (exactly as he was, without changing his uniform for camp clothing) be put to hauling manure to the vegetable garden. In that same colony high-ranking executives of the Lithuanian Administration of Corrective Labor Camps came to the bath and lay down on the benches and and gave orders they be washed, not just by prisoners but by 58's only.

Well, just look at their faces. After all, they are still going about among us today. They may well turn out to be next to us in a train (though not in anything less than a first-class compartment). Or in a plane. They have a wreath in their lapel buttonhole, though what the wreath crowns it is impossible to say, and, it is true enough, their shoulder boards are no longer sky-blue (they are shy), but the piping is blue, or even red, or maroon. An oaken cruelty is etched into their faces, and they always have

a gloomy, dissatisfied expression. It would seem as if everything was going well in their lives, but there is that expression of dissatisfaction. Perhaps they have the feeling that they are missing out on something better? Or perhaps God has marked them out infallibly for all their evildoings? On the Vologda, Archangel, and Urals trains, in first-class compartments the percentage of this kind of *military* is higher. Outside the window shabby camp watchtowers loom. "Is that your *establishment?*" asks a neighbor. The military man nods his head affirmatively, and says in a satisfied, even proud, way: "Ours." "Is that where you are going?" "Yes." "And does your wife work there too?" "She gets 90. Yes, and I get 250 myself. [This means he's a major.] Two children. You'll not get far on that." Now this one here, for example, even has city manners, and is a very pleasant person to talk to on the train. Collective-farm fields have flashed past, and he explains: "In agriculture things are going along much better. Nowadays they *sow whatever they want to.*" (And when for the first time men clambered out of their caves to plant crops on a burned-over spot in the forest, did they not sow "whatever they wanted to"?)

In 1962 I traveled through Siberia on a train for the first time as a free man. And it just had to happen! In my compartment there was a young MVD man, just graduated from the Tavda school, traveling under orders from the Irkutsk Administration of Corrective Labor Camps. I pretended to be a sympathetic idiot, and he told me how they went through probationary work in contemporary camps, and how impudent, feelingless, and hopeless the prisoners were. On his face there had not yet set in that constant, permanent cruelty, but he triumphantly showed me a photo of the third graduating class at Tavda, in which there were not only boys—but also veteran camp keepers finishing up their education (in training dogs, in criminal investigation, in camp management and in Marxism-Leninism) more for the sake of their pensions than for the sake of service. And even though I had been around, nonetheless I exclaimed! Their blackness of heart stands out on their faces! How adroitly they pick them out from all humanity!

In a POW camp in Ahtme, in Estonia, there was an incident. A Russian nurse became intimate with a German POW, and they were found out. Not only did they evict her forthwith from their noble midst. Oh, no! For this woman who wore Russian officer's

shoulder boards, they nailed together a plank booth with a tiny window near the gatehouse outside the camp compound (they spared no work and effort on this). They kept her in this booth for a week, and every free employee on his way "to work," and on his return, would throw stones at the booth, and shout: "You German whore!" And spit at her.

That is how they are chosen.

Let us help history preserve the names of the Kolyma camp-keeper butchers who (at the end of the thirties) knew no limits to their power and inventive cruelty: Pavlov, Vishnevetsky, Gakayev, Zhukov, Komarov, M. A. Kudryashev, Logovinenko, Merinov, Nikishov, Reznikov, Titov, Vasily "Durovoi." Let us also recall Svetlichny, the famous torturer of Norilsk, responsible for the loss of many zek lives.

Others, without our help, will tell about such monsters as Chechev (dismissed from the MVD in the Baltic States and sent to be chief of Steplag); Tarasenko (the chief of Usollag); Korotitsyn and Didorenko from Kargopollag; the fierce Barabanov (chief at the end of the war at Pechorlag); the chief of regimen at PechZhelDorlag Smirnov; Major Chepig (chief of regimen of Vorkutlag). Just a list of these famous names would take up dozens of pages. It is not for my lonely pen to pursue them all to the end. And they still have their former power. They have not yet set aside an office for me in which to gather all these materials, or offered me broadcast facilities for appeals over the All-Union radio networks.

One thing more about Mamulov, and that will suffice. This is that same Mamulov of the Khovrino Camp whose brother was the chief of Beria's secretariat. When our armies had liberated half of Germany, many of the MVD big-shots rushed there, Mamulov among them. From there he sent back whole train-loads of sealed cars—to his own Khovrino Station. The cars were shunted into the camp compound so that free railroad workers would not see what was in them—officially described as "valuable factory equipment"—and Mamulov's own zeks unloaded them. No one cared whether they saw. Shoved in there, in bulk, was everything that crazed looters grab: chandeliers ripped from ceilings, antique and ordinary furniture, table services wrapped up in wrinkled tablecloths, kitchen utensils, evening dresses and housedresses, women's and men's under-

wear and linens, dress coats, silk hats, and even canes! Here all this was sorted out, and whatever remained whole was carried off to apartments and distributed among friends. Mamulov also brought from Germany a whole parking-lotful of confiscated automobiles. He even gave his son an Opel Kadett, the son being twelve years old (the age of a camp kid!). For whole months long the tailor and shoemaker shops in camp were piled high with loot which had to be altered. Yes, and Mamulov had more than one apartment in Moscow and more than one woman, too, whom he had to provide for! But his favorite apartment was in the suburbs, at the camp. Sometimes Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria himself came here to visit. They brought out from Moscow a makeshift Gypsy chorus and even let two of the zeks in on these orgies—the guitarist Fetisov and the dancer Malinin (formerly from the Red Army Ensemble for Song and Dance). And they were warned: If you ever say a word anywhere, I'll see to it you rot! Here is the kind of person Mamulov was: They were returning from a fishing trip and dragged their boat through the vegetable garden of some old man, trampling all over it. The old man, it seems, began to protest. And how did they reward him? Mamulov beat him up with his own fists to the point where the old man lay there, groaning into the ground. "It belongs to me, and for that they beat me," as the saying goes.[7]

But I feel that my tale is becoming monotonous: Does it seem that I am repeating myself? Or is it that we have already read about this here, there, and elsewhere?

I hear objections! I hear objections! Yes, there were such individual facts. . . . But for the most part under Beria . . . But why don't you give some of the bright examples? Just describe some of the good ones for us! Show us our dearly beloved fathers. . . .

But no! Let those who saw them show them. I didn't see them. I have already deduced the generalized judgment that a camp keeper *could not be a decent person*—either he had to change direction or they got rid of him. Let us suppose for just one moment that a camp keeper decided to do good and to replace

7. When Beria fell in 1953, Mamulov was in bad trouble, but not for long, because after all he did belong to the ruling elite. He came out unscathed and became one of the chiefs of the Moscow Construction Trust. Then he got into trouble again for black-marketing apartments. And once again he rose to the top. And by now it is ample time for him to be on a pension.

the currish regimen in his camp with one that was humane: Would he be allowed to? Would they permit it? Would they let this happen? You might just as well leave a samovar out in the frost to heat up.

Now I am willing to accept certain things: There were "good" men who kept trying unsuccessfully to get out, who had not yet left, but who were going to leave. For example, the director of a Moscow shoe factory, M. Gerasimov, had his Party card taken from him, but they did not expel him from the Party. (This form of discipline did actually exist.) And in the meantime where could they send him? To Ust-Vym to be a camp keeper. And they say that he was very unhappy and depressed in this position and was easy on the zeks. In five months' time he got out of the job and left. And this I can believe: that for those five months he was good. And then, too, supposedly, in Ortau in 1944 there was a camp chief named Smeshko who was not known to have done anything bad—and he, too, was trying to get out of his job. In the Administration of the Northeastern Corrective Labor Camps the former pilot Morozov, section chief in 1946, had a decent attitude toward the zeks, and for that he was in the bad books of the administration. Or Captain Siverkin in Nyrob-lag was, they say, a decent man. And what came of that? They sent him to Parma, a penalty-work party. And he had two occupations there: he drank hooch and listened to the Western radio. In these localities the jamming was weak (1952). And then my neighbor in the railroad car, the Tavda graduate, he also possessed good impulses: There was a young fellow in the corridor who had no ticket and who had been standing a whole day. And so this fellow said: "Shall we make room for him, give him a place? Let him get some sleep?" But just give him a year's service as a chief, and he will do something else again—he will go to the conductor: "Get rid of that fellow without a ticket!" Isn't that right?

Well, I will speak honestly. I knew one very good MVD man —true, not a camp keeper but a jail keeper—Lieutenant Colonel Tsukanov.* For a brief while he was the chief of the Special Prison at Marfino. Not only I but all the zeks there admit that no one suffered evil and all experienced good from him. Whenever he could bend the order in the zeks' favor . . . he invariably did. And whatever he could ease up on . . . he invariably did.

And what happened? They reclassified our Special Prison into a stricter classification—and he was removed. He was not a young man and had served a long time in the MVD. And how he had done it I don't know. It is a riddle.

And Arnold Rappoport assures me that Colonel of Engineers Mikhail Mitrofanovich Maltsev, an army field engineer, who from 1943 to 1947 was chief of Vorkutlag—both the construction project and the camp—was, supposedly, a good man. In the presence of Chekists he shook the hands of zek engineers and addressed them politely. He could not stand career Chekists, and he held in contempt the chief of the Political Branch, Colonel Kukhtikov. And when he was commissioned with a State Security rank—General Commissar, Third Rank—he refused. (Can that be?) He said: "I am an engineer." And he got his way. He became an ordinary general. During the years of his administration, Rappoport assures me, not one single camp *case* was ever set in motion in Vorkuta. (And these, after all, were the war years, the very period for all those camp *cases.*) His wife was the prosecutor for the city of Vorkuta and succeeded in paralyzing the creative work of the camp security officers. This is a very important piece of evidence, if only A. Rappoport is not exaggerating involuntarily because of his own privileged position as an engineer at that time. Somehow I find it hard to really believe it; why, then, did they not get rid of this Maltsev? After all, he must have been *in everyone's way.* Let us hope that someone someday will establish the truth here. (Commanding a division of field engineers at Stalingrad, Maltsev could summon a regimental commander in front of the line-up and shoot him himself. He was sent to Vorkuta in disfavor, but not for that, for something else.)

In this and in other similar cases faulty memory and extraneous personal impressions sometimes distort recollections. And when they speak about *good men,* one wishes to ask: Good to whom? To all?

And former front-line officers were by no means an improvement as replacements for veteran MVD men. Chulpenyov bears witness that things got no better, but even worse, when an old camp dog was replaced, at the end of the war, by a front-line officer invalided out, like Regimental Commissar Yegorov. Understanding nothing at all of camp life, they issued careless,

superficial orders and then went out of the camp compound on a drinking spree with some broads, turning the camp over to the scoundrels from among the trusties.

However, those who *shout* particularly loudly about "good Chekists" in camps—these being the loyalist orthodox Communists—do not have in mind "good" in the sense in which we understand it; they don't mean those who tried to create a generally humane condition for all imprisoned there, at the cost of deviating from the savage instructions of Gulag. No, they consider those camp keepers "good" who honestly carried out all the currish instructions, who tore to pieces and tormented the whole crowd of prisoners, but did favors for the former Communists. (What breadth of view the loyalists have! They are always the heirs of universal human culture! . . .)

There actually were, of course, such "good" camp keepers as these, and no few of them. For example, Kudlaty with his volumes of Lenin—wasn't he such a one? Dyakov tells about one, and here was his nobility: During a business trip to Moscow the chief of camp visited the home of one of the orthodox Communist prisoners serving time in his camp, and returned—and immediately went right on carrying out all his currish duties. And General Gorbatov recalls a "good" Kolyma camp keeper: "People are accustomed to consider us some sort of monsters of cruelty, but this opinion is erroneous. We, too, enjoy communicating good news to a prisoner." (But the letter from Gorbatov's wife in which the passage where she warned him about the reconsideration of his case was blacked out by the censor—why did they deprive themselves of the enjoyment of communicating good news? But Gorbatov sees no contradiction in this: the chiefs say it, and the army general believes it.) And what that "good" Kolyma cur was worried about . . . was that Gorbatov might say something "up top" about the tyranny in his camp. That was why that pleasant conversation took place. And at the very end: "Be careful in your conversations." (And Gorbatov again understood nothing at all. . . .)

And here in *Izvestiya* (September 6, 1964) Levkovich writes a so-called *passionate*—but in our opinion assigned—article: She had known several good, intelligent, strict, sad, tired, etc., Chekists, and a certain Kapustin in Dzhambul had tried to arrange jobs for the exiled wives of Communists and because of

this was forced to shoot himself. Now this is total delirium. Nonsense! The commandant *is obliged* to arrange work for exiles, even by compulsion. And if he really did shoot himself—what this means is that it was because he had either embezzled or got in a mess with some broads. But what was the central organ of the former VTsIK, *Izvestiya* (the very same that had approved of all the Gulag cruelties), trying to prove? It was saying that if there were some good serf owners, then there had never been any serfdom in general. . . .

Yes, and here is another "good" camp keeper: our Ekibastuz Lieutenant Colonel Matveyev. Under Stalin he showed and clacked his sharp teeth, but once Papa Stalin had died and Beria had had it—Matveyev became a leading liberal, the father of the natives! Well, until the next change of wind anyway. (But on the quiet, even during that year, he instructed the brigadier Aleksandrov: "If someone doesn't obey you—punch him in the snoot. Nothing will happen to you, I promise!")

No, "good" men like that are "good" only until the wind changes! All that kind of "good" men—are good and cheap! In our view they were good only when they themselves served time in camp.

And . . . some did serve time. But what they were tried for was not for *that*.

■

The camp custodial staff was considered the junior command staff of the MVD. These were the Gulag noncoms. And that was the kind of assignment they had—to worry the prey and not let go. They were on the same Gulag ladder, only lower. As a result they had fewer rights and they had to use their own hands more often. However, they were not sparing of their hands, and if they were required to bloody someone up in the penalty isolator or in the jailers' room, three of them would boldly beat up on one even until they had knocked him out. Year by year they coarsened in the service, and you couldn't observe in them the least cloudlet of pity toward the soaked, freezing, hungry, tired, and dying prisoners. In relation to them the prisoners were just as deprived of rights, and just as defenseless, as in relation to the big chiefs. And they could bring pressure to bear on the prisoners in the same way—and feel themselves to be high up.

And they could vent their malice and display cruelty—they encountered no barriers. And when you start beating with impunity—once you've started you don't want to stop. Tyranny incites you and you feel yourself to be so ferocious that you are afraid even of yourself. The jailers willingly copied their officers in their conduct, and in character traits too—but they didn't have that gold on their shoulder boards and their greatcoats were dirtyish, and they went everywhere on foot, and they were not allowed prisoner-servants, and they dug in their own gardens, and looked after their own farm animals. Well, of course, they did manage *to haul off* a zek to their places for half a day now and then—to chop wood, to wash floors—this they could do, but not on a lavish scale. And not using the working zeks either, but those resting. (Tabaterov—in Berezniki in 1930—had only just lain down after a twelve-hour night shift when the jailer awakened him and sent him to his house to work. And just try not to go! . . .) The jailers had no *patrimonial estates;* the camp for them, after all, was not a patrimonial estate, but their service, and therefore they did not have either that arrogance or that despotic scope. And there were obstacles in the way of thievery too. This was an injustice; even without thievery the chiefs had plenty of money—and they could steal much too, and the custodial staff had much less—and were allowed to steal less too. No one was going to give you a full bag from the storeroom —hardly even a small pouch. (Right now I can see before my eyes, as if it were today, the big-faced, flaxen-haired Sergeant Kisilyov; he came into the bookkeeping office in 1945 and ordered: "Don't issue one ounce of fats and oils to the zek kitchen! Only to the free employees!" There were not enough fats. And this was their whole advantage—fats according to the norm. . . .) In order to have something sewn for them in the camp tailor shop, they had to have the camp chief's permission and wait their turn. Well, at work you could make the zek do a small task for you—solder, cook, hammer, or sharpen something. Anything larger than a stool you'd not always manage to carry out. This limitation on thievery deeply affronted the jailers, especially their wives, and because of this there was much bitterness against the chiefs, because of this life seemed very unjust, and within the jailer's breast there stirred not so much sensitive heart strings as a sense of unfulfillment, an emptiness echoing a human groan. And sometimes the lower-ranking jailers were capable of talking

sympathetically with the zeks. Not so often, but not all that rarely either. In any case, among both prison and camp jailers it was possible to find human beings. Every prisoner encountered more than one in his career. In an officer it was virtually impossible.

This, properly speaking, was the universal law of the inverse ratio between social position and humaneness.

The real jailers were those who had served in camp fifteen and twenty-five years. Whoever had once settled down in those accursed distant places . . . would never be able to clamber out again. Once they had memorized the statute and daily routine, there was nothing else in their whole lives that they had to read or know, and all they did was to listen to the radio, the Moscow program No. 1. And it was their corps that constituted for us the vacantly expressionless, unwavering face of Gulag, inaccessible to any thought.

Only during the war years was the composition of the jailers' staff distorted and muddied. The military authorities in their haste disregarded the sanctity of the custodial service, and took some of them away to the front, and in place of them began to send soldiers from army units released from hospitals—but even from these they selected the stupidest and cruelest. And old men turned up as well, mobilized straight here from home. And among these gray-mustached fellows were many good-hearted, unprejudiced people—they spoke gently, searched perfunctorily, confiscated nothing, and even joked. They never registered complaints nor reported people to be sent to the punishment cell. But after the war they were soon demobilized and there weren't any more of them.

There were unusual individuals among the jailers (in wartime too) like the student Senin, about whom I have already written, and one other Jewish jailer in our camp at Kaluga Gates—elderly, with a very civilian appearance, very calm, not fault-finding, and no one suffered misfortune from him. He was so mild in his bearing that on one occasion I was bold enough to ask: "Tell me, what is your civilian profession?" He took not the slightest offense, looked at me with calm eyes, and quietly replied: "Merchant." During the war before coming to our camp he had served in Podolsk, where, as he related, thirteen or fourteen people had died every day of the war from starvation. (And that alone makes twenty thousand deaths!) He evidently lasted

out the war in the "armies" of the NKVD, and now he had to be nimble and not get stuck there for good.

But take Master Sergeant Tkach, the dreaded assistant to the chief of regimen of the Ekibastuz Camp, who fitted in with the jailers just as if he had been specially cast in a mold, as if from his diapers on he had served only there, as if he had been born along with Gulag. His was always an immobile, ominous face beneath a black forelock. It was frightening merely to be next to him or to run into him on a camp path; he would not walk past without doing a person harm—ordering him to turn back, compelling him to work, taking something away from him, scaring him, punishing him, placing him under arrest. Even after the evening roll call, when the barracks were all locked but, in summertime, the barred windows were left open, Tkach would creep silently up to the windows, listen there, then peer in—the whole room would be rustling—and from outside the windowsill, like a black bird of night, he would announce punishments through the grating: for not sleeping, for talking, for making or using something forbidden.

And all of a sudden . . . Tkach disappeared for good. And the rumor swept through camp (it was impossible to check it out, nonetheless such persistent rumors as this were usually correct) that he had been exposed as a Fascist executioner on occupied territory, that he had been arrested and had received a whole *quart*—twenty-five years. This was in 1952.

How had it happened, however, that a Fascist executioner (for no more than three years, certainly) had for seven years after the war been in the best graces of the MVD?

You tell me!

■

"The convoy opens fire without warning!" This invocation encompassed the whole special statute of the convoy[8]—and its power over us on the other side of the law.

8. When we say "convoy," we are using the everyday term of the Archipelago; they used to say too, and even more often in the Corrective Labor Camps, the VOKhR—the Militarized Guards—or simply OKhR. Their full title was Militarized Guard Service of the MVD, and "convoy" was only one of the possible services of the VOKhR, along with service "on watch duty," "perimeter duty," "patrol duty," and "in battalion."

Convoy service—even when there was no war—was like front-line service. The convoy had nothing to fear from any investigation, and did not have to give any explanations. Every convoy guard who fired was right. Every prisoner killed was guilty—of wanting to escape or of stepping across the line.

Take two murders at the Ortau Camp. (And you can multiply them by the total number of camps.) A guard was leading a group under convoy, and a person not under convoy went up to his girl friend in the group and walked along beside her. "Move away!" "Is it doing you any harm?" A shot. Killed. A comedy of a trial, and the guard was acquitted: he had been insulted while carrying out service duties.

At the gatehouse, a zek ran up to another guard with a release document (he was going to be released the next day) and asked: "Let me through, I am going to the laundry [outside the camp compound]. I'll only be a minute!" "You can't." "But tomorrow I'm going to be free, fool!" The guard shot him dead. Killed. And there wasn't even a trial.

And how easy it was for a prisoner not to notice in the heat of his work those blazes on the trees which constituted an imaginary dotted line, a forest cordon instead of barbed wire. For example, Solovyov (a former army lieutenant) cut down a fir tree and, moving backward, was cleaning the branches off it. He saw only his felled tree. And a convoy guard, "a Tonshayevo wolf," squinted and waited. He wouldn't call out to the zek, "Watch out!" He just waited, and Solovyov, not noticing, crossed the line of the work zone, continuing to back his way down the tree trunk. A shot! An explosive bullet and a lung was blown apart. Solovyov was killed—and the Tonshayevo wolf got a hundred-ruble prize. ("Tonshayevo wolves" . . . were the local inhabitants of Tonshayevo District near Burepolom, who had all enlisted in the VOKhR during the war, so as to be closer to home and not go to the front. This was the same Tonshayevo District where the children used to shout: "Mama! Here comes a *herring!*")

This absoluteness in the relations between the convoy and the prisoners, this continual right of the guards to use a bullet instead of a word, could not fail to influence the character of the VOKhR officers and the VOKhR enlisted men as well. The lives of the prisoners were given into their power, though not for the whole day, yet totally and profoundly. To them the natives

were not people. They were some sort of lazy animated scarecrows, whom fate had given them to count, to drive to work and from work as swiftly as possible, and to keep at work as densely crowded together as possible.

But tyranny was even more intense among the officers of the VOKhR. These young whippersnappers of lieutenants had acquired a balefully despotic sensation of power over existence. Some were only loud-mouthed (Senior Lieutenant Chorny in Nyroblag), others reveled in cruelty and even let it carry over to their own soldiers (Lieutenant Samutin, in the same camp); still others did not recognize any limitations on their omnipotence. The Commander of VOKhR, Nevsky (Camp No. 3 at Ust-Vym), discovered the loss of his dog—not a service dog, but his beloved little lap dog. He went to look for it, of course, in the camp compound, and it was his luck to catch five natives dividing up the carcass. He pulled out his pistol and shot one dead on the spot. (There were no administrative consequences of the incident, except punishment of the remaining four zeks in the penalty isolator.)

In 1938 in the area west of the Urals a forest fire flew with the speed of a hurricane along the Vishera River—and from the forest into two camps. What was to be done with the zeks? The decision had to be made instantly—there was no time to consult with higher jurisdictions. The guard refused to release them—and they all burned to death. That was the easy way. If they had been released and escaped, the guards would have been court-martialed.

There was only one limitation in VOKhR service on the bubbling energy of its officers: The platoon was the basic unit, and all that omnipotence came to an end above the platoon, and in rank *above* lieutenant. Advancement in the battalion simply had the effect of separating the officer from the actual and real power of the platoon, and was a dead-end street.

And as a result, the most power-hungry and powerful of the VOKhR officers tried to leapfrog into the internal service of the MVD and to get their promotion there. Certain famous Gulag biographies consisted indeed of this. The already mentioned Antonov, the ruler of the "road of the dead" in the Arctic, had risen from a VOKhR commander, and his whole education was . . . through the fourth grade.

There is no doubt that inside the Ministry the selection of the

infantry guard of the MVD was considered of great importance, and the military conscription centers had secret instructions on this. The military conscription centers conduct a great deal of secret work. Yet we take a benign attitude toward them. Why, for example, has there been such a determined rejection of the twenties concept of territorial armies (the project of Frunze)? And why is it, exactly to the contrary, that the newly called recruits are sent with exceptional persistence to serve in armies that are as far as possible from their own region—Azerbaijanians to Estonia, Latvians to the Caucasus, etc.? Because the armies must be alien to the local population, and preferably even of a different race (as was tested in Novocherkassk in 1962). And so in the selection of convoy troops there was, not without design, a higher percentage of Tatars and other minority nationalities; their inferior education and their lack of information were valuable to the state, they were its fortress.

But the real scientific organization and training of these armies only began at the same time as the Special Camps—the Osoblagi—at the end of the forties and the beginning of the fifties. They began to take only nineteen-year-old boys and immediately would subject them to intense ideological irradiation. (We are going to discuss this convoy separately.)

But until then it somehow seemed to be beyond their reach in Gulag. The truth was that not all our people, even though socialist, had yet risen to that steadfast cruel level necessary for a worthy camp guard! The VOKhR staff was uneven, and ceased to be the wall of horror it was intended to be. It softened up especially in the years of the Soviet-German war; the very best trained (in "good viciousness") of the young fellows had to be surrendered to the front, and sickly reservists were dragged into VOKhR, too unhealthy to be suitable for the active army, and too untrained in viciousness for Gulag (they were not brought up in the right years). In the most mercilessly hungry war years in camp this relaxation of the VOKhR (wherever it took place; it didn't take place everywhere) at least partially eased the life of the prisoners.

Nina Samshel recollects her father, who, in 1942, was called up into the army at an advanced age and sent to serve as a guard in a camp in Archangel Province. His family joined him there. "At home my father spoke bitterly about life in camp, and

about the good people who were there. When my papa had to guard a brigade all by himself at a prison farm [this, too, was wartime—one guard for the whole brigade: wasn't that a relaxation?], I often went to see him there and he allowed me to talk with the prisoners. The prisoners had a lot of respect for my father; he was never rude to them, and he let them go to the store, for example, when they asked, and they never tried to escape from him. They said to me: 'Now if only all the convoy guards were like your father!' He knew that many innocents had been imprisoned,[9] and he was always indignant, but only at home—in the platoon he could say nothing. They imprisoned people for that." At the end of the war he was immediately demobilized.

But one cannot consider Samshel a typical wartime model. His subsequent fate shows it. In 1947 he himself was arrested under Article 58! And in 1950 he was released because he was dying and allowed to return home, where he died five months later.

After the war this loose sort of guarding still lasted a year or two, and it somehow began to happen that many of the VOKhR guards also began to talk of their service as their "sentence": "When I finish my sentence." They understood the shame of their service, the kind of service you could not talk about to the family at home. In that same Ortau, one convoy guard intentionally stole something from the KVCh, and was dismissed from the service and convicted and immediately amnestied—and the other guards envied him: He had found the way! Smart boy!

N. Stolyarova recalls a guard who caught her at the beginning of an escape attempt—and concealed her attempt. And she was not punished. One other shot himself out of love for a zechka sent off on a prisoner transport. Before the introduction of real severities in the women's camps, friendly, good, yes, and even loving relations between the women prisoners and the convoy guards had often begun. Not even our great state had managed to stamp out goodness and love everywhere!

The young reinforcements of the postwar years also did not become immediately what Gulag wanted them to be. When a member of the Nyroblag infantry guards, Vladilen Zadorny,

9. The guard Samshel knew, but our elite writers *did not know!*

mutinied (we will have more to say about him), his mates in the service who were of his age took a very sympathetic attitude toward his resistance.

Self-guarding constitutes a special area in the history of the camp guard. Back, indeed, in the first postrevolutionary years it was proclaimed that *self-watch* was a duty of Soviet prisoners. This was employed at Solovki, not without success, and very widely on the White Sea–Baltic Canal, and on the Moscow-Volga Canal; every socially friendly prisoner who did not wish to push a wheelbarrow could take up a rifle against his comrades.

We will not affirm that this was a special, diabolical plan for the moral disintegration of the people. As always in the half-century of our most recent modern history, a lofty, bright theory and creeping moral vileness somehow got naturally interwoven, and were easily transformed into one another. But from the stories of the old zeks it has become known that the prisoner trusty guards were cruel to their own brothers, strove to curry favor and to hold on to their dogs' duties, and sometimes settled old accounts with a bullet on the spot.

And this has also been noted in our literature on jurisprudence: "In many cases those who were deprived of freedom carried out their duties of guarding the colonies and maintaining order *better* than the staff jailers."[10]

And so tell me—what bad is there that one cannot teach a nation? Or people? Or all humanity?

That particular quotation came from the thirties, and Zadorny confirms it as being also true for the end of the forties: the trusty guards were vicious toward their comrades, used formal reasons for entrapment, and shot them. And in Parma, the penalty expedition of Nyroblag, the only prisoners were the 58's and the trusty guards were also 58's. Politicals . . .

Vladilen tells about the trusty guard Kuzma, a former chauffeur, a young fellow little more than twenty years old. In 1949 he had received a tenner for 58-10. How was he to survive? He could find no other way. In 1952 Vladilen found him working as a trusty guard. His situation tormented him, and he said he could not bear the burden of his rifle. When he went out on guard duties, he often didn't load it. At night he wept, calling himself

10. Vyshinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

a mercenary coward, and he even wanted to shoot himself. He had a high forehead, a nervous face. He loved verses, and he went off with Vladilen into the taiga to recite them. And then again he used to take up his rifle. . . .

And he knew a trusty guard named Aleksandr Lunin, who was already well along in years and whose gray locks formed a wreath about his forehead, and who had a kind, good-natured smile. In the war he had been an infantry lieutenant—and then the chairman of a collective farm. He had received a tenner (under a nonpolitical article) because he had refused to give in to the demands of the District Party Committee and had arranged distributions to the collective farmers on his own. Which means he was that kind of man! His neighbors were dearer to him than he himself was. And there in Nyroblag he became a trusty guard, and even earned a reduction in his term from the chief of the Promezhutochnaya Camp.

The bounds of a human being! No matter how you are astounded by them, you can never comprehend. . . .

Chapter 21

■

Campside

Like a piece of rotten meat which not only stinks right on its own surface but also surrounds itself with a stinking molecular cloud of stink, so, too, each island of the Archipelago created and supported a zone of stink around itself. This zone, more extensive than the Archipelago itself, was the intermediate transmission zone between the small zone of each individual island and the Big Zone—the Big Camp Compound—comprising the entire country.

Everything of the most infectious nature in the Archipelago —in human relations, morals, views, and language—in compliance with the universal law of osmosis in plant and animal tissue, seeped first into this transmission zone and then dispersed through the entire country. It was right here, in the transmission zone, that those elements of camp ideology and culture worthy of entering into the nationwide culture underwent trial and selection. And when camp expressions ring in the corridors of the new building of the Moscow State University, or when an independent woman in the capital delivers a verdict wholly from out of camp on the essence of life—don't be surprised: it got there via the transmission zone, via campside.

While the government attempted (or perhaps did not attempt) to re-educate the prisoners through slogans, the Cultural and Educational Section, censorship of mail, and the security chiefs —the prisoners more swiftly re-educated the entire country through campside. The thieves' philosophy, which initially had conquered the Archipelago, easily swept further and captured the All-Union ideological market, a wasteland without any

stronger ideology. The camp tenacity, its cruelty in human relations, its armor of insensitivity over the heart, its hostility to any kind of conscientious work—all this effortlessly tamed campside without difficulty, and then went on to make a deep impression on all *freedom.*

Thus it is that the Archipelago takes its vengeance on the Soviet Union for its creation.

Thus it is that no cruelty whatsoever passes by without impact.

Thus it is that we always pay dearly for chasing after what is cheap.

■

To give a list of these places, these hick towns, these settlements, would be almost the same as recapitulating the geography of the entire Archipelago. There wasn't a single camp compound which could ever exist on its own—next door to it there had to be a settlement of free people. Sometimes this settlement at some temporary logging camp or other would stand there several years—and disappear along with the camp. Sometimes it would put down roots, get a name, a town soviet, a branch line—and stay there forever. And sometimes famous cities would grow up out of these settlements—like Magadan, Dudinka, Igarka, Temir-Tau, Balkhash, Dzhezkazgan, Angren, Taishet, Bratsk, Sovetskaya Gavan. These settlements festered not only in the outposts of the wilderness, but also in the very torso of Russia—around the mines of the Donbas and Tula, next to peat diggings, next to agricultural camps. Sometimes entire districts were infected and belonged to the world of campside, like Tonshayevo. And when a camp was injected into the body of a big city, even Moscow itself, campside also existed—not in the form of a special settlement, but in the form of those separate individuals who flowed away from it every night on trolleybuses and motorbuses and who were drawn back into it again every morning. (In these cases the transmission of the infection proceeded outside at an accelerated rate.)

There were also such towns as Kizel (on the Perm mining and metallurgical branch line); they had begun their existence before there was any Archipelago, but subsequently turned out to be surrounded by a multitude of camps—and thus were transformed into provincial capitals of the Archipelago. Such a

city would be permeated by the camp atmosphere. The camp officers and groups of the camp guards would go afoot or ride through it in droves, like occupying forces; the camp administration would be the city's main institution; the telephone network would not belong to the city but to the camps; the bus routes would all lead from the city's center to the camps; and all the town inhabitants would earn their living off the camps.

The largest of such provincial capitals of the Archipelago was Karaganda. It was created by and filled with exiles and former prisoners to such a degree that a veteran zek could not walk the street without running into old acquaintances. The city had several camp administrations. And individual camps were scattered all around it like the sands of the sea.

Who lived in campside? (1) The basic indigenous local inhabitants (there might be none). (2) The VOKhR—the Militarized Camp Guards. (3) The camp officers and their families. (4) The jailers and their families—and jailers, as distinct from camp guards, always lived with their families, even when they were listed as on military service. (5) Former zeks (released from the local camp or one nearby).[1] (6) Various restricted persons—"half-repressed" people, people with "unclean" passports. (Like the former zeks, they, too, were here not of their own free will, but of necessity; even if the particular place had not been assigned them as though they were exiles, it would be worse for them anywhere else in regard to both work and housing, and they might not even have been allowed to live anywhere else anyway.) (7) The works administration. These were highly placed people and constituted in all only a few people in a big settlement. (And sometimes there were none at all.) (8) Then, too, there were the *free employees*—the *volnyashki*—proper, all the tramps and riffraff—all kinds of strays and good-for-nothings and seekers after easy money. After all, in these remote death traps you could work three times as poorly as in the metropolis and get four times the wages—with bonuses for the Arctic, for remoteness, and for hardship, and you could also steal the work of the prisoners. And, in addition, many flocked there under recruitment programs and on contract, receiving moving and

1. The Stalinist epoch has gone, and various warm and cold breezes have blown over us—but many former zeks never did leave campside, never left their backwoods localities—and they were right not to. There they are at least half people, whereas here they would not be even that. They will stay there till they die, and their children will assimilate like the local inhabitants.

traveling expenses as well. For those able to pan the gold out of the work sheets campside was a real Klondike. People swarmed there with forged diplomas; adventurers, rascals, and money-grabbers poured in. It was particularly advantageous here for those who needed the free use of someone else's brains. (A semiliterate geologist would have zek geologists to carry out his field observations, work them up, draw all the conclusions, and then he himself could go defend his dissertation in the metropolis.) They sent here the total failures, and those who were simply hopeless drunks. Men came here after their families had broken up or to avoid alimony. Then, too, there were the young graduates of technical schools who had failed to get themselves into cushy spots when obligatory jobs were being assigned. But from the very first day of their arrival here they began to try to get back to the civilized world, and whoever couldn't manage it in one year's time would certainly be able to do it in two. But there was also quite a different category among the free employees: the elderly, who had already lived in campside for whole decades and had become so assimilated to its atmosphere that they no longer needed some other, sweeter world. If their camp shut down, or if the administration stopped paying them what they demanded—they left. But invariably they would move to some other such zone near a camp. They knew no other way to live. This was the situation of Vasily Aksentyevich Frolov, a great drunkard, a cheat, and a "famous master of casting," about whom I could tell many tales, except that I have already described him. Without any diploma, and despite the fact that he had drunk down his last skill as a master, he never received less than five thousand pre-Khrushchev rubles a month.

In the most general sense the word "*volnyashka*" means just any free person, in other words any citizen of the Soviet Union not yet arrested or already released, and therefore every citizen of campside. But most often this word was used in the Archipelago in the narrow sense: a "volnyashka" is that particular kind of free person who worked alongside prisoners in the same work compound. By this token those in groups 1, 5, and 6 above who came to the camp work compound to work were also "volnyashki."

"Volnyashki" were hired as construction superintendents, foremen, head foremen, warehouse managers, and norm setters. In addition, they were hired for those posts in which the employ-

ment of zeks would have made the work of the convoy much more difficult: drivers, draymen, dispatchers, tractor drivers, excavator operators, scraper operators, electrical linemen, night firemen.

These second-class "volnyashki," ordinary sloggers like the zeks, made friends with us right away without nonsense, and did everything forbidden by the camp regimen and by criminal law: they willingly deposited the zeks' letters in the *free* mailboxes of the settlement; they took and sold at the local free markets clothes the zeks had pinched in camp and kept the money, bringing the zeks some grub; together with the zeks they also plundered the project: they brought vodka into the work compound. (Despite very strict inspection at the gatehouse, they would drop flasks of vodka with tarred necks into the gasoline tanks of automobiles.)[2]

And wherever it was possible to credit the zeks' work to free people (the foremen and the head foremen were not at all squeamish about crediting themselves too), this was invariably done; after all, work credited to a prisoner did nothing for anyone. No one paid any money for it, but only gave them a bread ration. And that was why in unrationed times it made good sense to complete the zek's work sheet any old way, just so there was no serious trouble, and to credit the zek's work to a free man. The "volnyashka" got money for it, and he ate and drank himself, and gave his own zeks something to eat as well.[3]

2. And if it happened that the guard found them, there would still be no official report filed with the chief; the Komsomol guards preferred to drink any contraband vodka themselves.

3. The great advantage of working in campside could easily be observed even among the free employees of the Moscow camps. At our camp at the Kaluga Gates in 1946 there were two free bricklayers, one plasterer, one painter. They were listed as being employed at our construction project. As far as work went, they did almost none, because the project could not pay them large wages; there were no special bonus wages here, and all the areas were measured off exactly. For plastering one square yard they got thirty-two kopecks, and it was simply impossible to charge one and a half rubles per yard or to inflate the square yards to three times more than the room measured. But, in the first place, our free employees hauled off cement, paint, linseed oil, and glass, and, in the second place, they got a good *rest* during their eight-hour workday, and so at night and on Sundays they could really put their hearts into their main work—their work "on the left," private work—and there they made their money up. For the same square yard of wall space, that same plasterer got not thirty-two kopecks but ten rubles from a private person, and in the course of one evening he would earn two hundred rubles!

After all, as Prokhorov said: *"Money nowadays comes in two stories."* What Westerner could comprehend "two-story money"? A lathe operator dur-

And so in general you could not call the relations between the zeks and the "volnyashki" hostile. Instead, they were friendly. And these lost, half-drunken, ruined people were more sensitive to the grief of others, were capable of paying heed to the grief of a prisoner and the injustice of his arrest. The eyes of an unprejudiced human being were open to what the eyes of the officers, jailers, and guards were closed to because of their position.

The relations between the zeks and the foremen and the head foremen were more complex. As "commanders of production" they were put there to squeeze the prisoners and drive them. But they were answerable for the course of the work, and the work couldn't always be carried out in a condition of direct hostility between them and the zeks. Not everything can be got by hunger and the stick. Some things require willing agreement, both by inclination and by imagination. And the only foremen who were successful were those who reached an understanding with the brigadiers and with the best of the skilled craftsmen among the prisoners. And the foremen themselves were not just drunks and not simply enfeebled and poisoned by the constant employment of slave labor; they were also illiterate, and either knew nothing of their line of work or else knew it very badly, and because of this were even more dependent on the brigadiers.

And how interestingly Russian fates sometimes intertwined there! A carpenters' foreman, Fyodor Ivanovich Muravlyov, came to us in his cups before a holiday and bared his soul to the brigadier of painters, Sinebryukhov, an outstanding master of his trade, a serious, steadfast fellow who was serving out his tenth year:

"What? *You're serving time*, you kulak's son? Your father kept plowing away at the land and accumulated cows and figured

ing the war received, after deductions, eight hundred rubles a month, and bread cost 140 rubles on the open market. And that meant that in the course of one *month* he did not earn enough for even *six kilos* of bread, over and above his ration. In other words, he could not bring home even seven ounces a day for the whole family! But at the same time he did . . . live. With frank and open impudence they paid the workers an unreal wage, and let them go and seek "the second story." And the person who paid our plasterer insane money for his evening's work also got to the "second story" on his own in some particular way. Thus it was that the socialist system triumphed, but only on paper. The old ways—tenacious, flexible—never died out, as a result of either curses or persecution by the prosecutors.

he would take it all off to the kingdom of heaven. And where is he now? He died in exile? And they imprisoned you too? No, my father was smarter than that; from his earliest years he drank down everything and our hut was empty, and he didn't even give his chickens to the collective farm because he didn't have any or anything else—and right off they made him a brigadier. And I take after him—drinking vodka, and I know no grief."

And as it turned out he was right: Sinebryukhov, after serving out his sentence, would be sent off to exile, and Muravlyov . . . would become the chairman of the trade union committee on construction.

True, the construction superintendent, Buslov, could not wait to get rid of this chairman of the local trade union committee and foreman. (It was impossible to get rid of him; it was the personnel department that hired, not the construction superintendent, and the personnel department would often select loafers and dolts out of a feeling of kinship.) The construction superintendent answered for all the materials and wage fund out of his own pocket, but Muravlyov, out of illiteracy, or else because he was a simpleton (and he was not at all a malicious character, and because of this the brigadiers used to *carry* him), would squander that wage fund, sign unexamined work vouchers (which the brigadiers would fill in themselves), and accept badly done work, which would then have to be broken up and done over again. And Buslov would have been glad to replace that kind of foreman with a zek engineer who was working there with a pick, but because of vigilance the personnel department did not permit this.

"Well, now, tell me: what length beams do you have at the moment on the site?"

Muravlyov sighed deeply. "For the time being I hesitate to tell you exactly."

And the drunker Muravlyov got, the more impudently he used to speak to the construction superintendent. And at that point the construction superintendent decided to besiege him with paper work. Despite the time it cost, he began to put all his orders in writing (keeping carbons in a file). These orders were not executed, of course, and a fearsome case was being built up. But the chairman of the local union was not at a loss. He got himself a half-sheet of wrinkled notebook paper, and took half an hour to scrawl out with difficulty, clumsily:

i bring toyr information That all mechanisms which are for carpeny work in not working order whichis in a Bad state and exclusively do not work.

The construction superintendent was quite a different level of work management. For the prisoners he was a constant oppressor and a constant enemy. The construction superintendent would not enter either into friendly relations with the brigadiers or into deals with them. He used to *cut back* their work sheets, expose their "tukhta" (to the extent that he was smart enough), and he could always punish a brigadier and any prisoner through the camp administration:

To Camp Chief Lieutenant:

I request you to punish in the severest manner—preferably in punishment cell—but with his being taken out to work—the brigadier of the cement workers, the prisoner Zozulya, and the foreman, the prisoner Orachevsky, for casting slabs thicker than the indicated measurement, in which was expressed an overexpenditure of cement.

Simultaneously I wish to inform you that this day in dealing with me on the question of registering the volume of work in the work sheets the prisoner brigadier Alekseyev insulted the foreman Comrade Tumarkin, calling him a *jackass*. Such conduct on the part of the prisoner Alekseyev, which undermines the authority of the free administration, I consider extremely undesirable and even dangerous and beg you to take the firmest measures up to and including his being sent away on a prisoner transport.

Senior Construction Supervisor Buslov.

This very same Tumarkin had in a suitable moment been called a jackass by Buslov himself, but the zek brigadier, on the basis of his worth, deserved a prisoner transport.

Buslov sent the camp chiefs such notes nearly every day. He saw the camp punishments as the highest form of work stimulus. Buslov was one of those work bosses who had worked himself into the Gulag system and who had adapted himself to the ways of getting things done. That's what he said at meetings: "I have long experience of work with the zeks, and I do not fear their threats to flatten me with a brick." But, he regretted, the Gulag generations had changed for the worse. The people who came to camp after the war, and after Europe, turned out to be disrespectful types. "But working in 1937, you understand, that was pure pleasure. For example, when a free employee entered, the zeks invariably rose to their feet." Buslov knew both how to

deceive the prisoners and how to put them in dangerous situations, and he never spared their strength, nor their stomachs, nor, still less, their vanity. Long-nosed, long-legged, wearing yellow American oxfords donated to needy Soviet citizens, which he had received through UNRRA, he perpetually rushed around the floors of the construction, knowing that otherwise the lazy, dirty beings called ze-ka ze-ka would be sitting in all his corners and crannies, lying, warming themselves, looking for lice, or even copulating, notwithstanding the urgency of the short ten-hour working day, and the brigadiers would be crowding the norms office and writing up "tukhta" (false figures) on work sheets.

And out of all the foremen there was only one on whom he partially relied—Fyodor Vasilyevich Gorshkov. He was a puny old guy with bristling gray mustaches. He had a keen understanding of the construction, and he knew both his own work and that contiguous to his, and his principal and unusual trait among the "volnyashki" was the fact that he had an honest interest in the outcome of the construction—not a pocket interest, like Buslov (would they fine him or give him a bonus? curse him out or praise him?), but an inner interest, just as if he were building the whole enormous building for himself and wanted it to be as good as possible. He was a careful drinker too, and never lost sight of the construction. But he had one major shortcoming: he had not adjusted to the Archipelago, and he was unaccustomed to keeping the prisoners in terror. He also liked to go around the construction and peer searchingly with his own eyes; however, he did not rush about like Buslov, and he was not trying to catch those who were cheating, and he liked to sit down and chat with the carpenters on the beams, with the bricklayers at their bricklaying, with the plasterers at their mixing box. Sometimes he shared candies with the zeks—a wondrous thing to us. There was one kind of work which even in his old age he simply could not get along without—glass cutting. He always had his own diamond glass cutter in his pocket, and if someone started cutting glass in his presence, he would begin to hoot right off that they were cutting it wrong, and he would push the glass workers away and cut it himself. Buslov went off for a month to Sochi—and Fyodor Vasilyevich replaced him, but he refused flatly to sit in Buslov's office, and remained right in the foremen's common room.

The whole winter Gorshkov went about in an old Russian short "poddyovka"—a waisted coat. Its collar had grown threadbare, but the outside material was remarkably well preserved. They used to say of that "poddyovka" that Gorshkov had been wearing it for going on thirty-one years without ever taking it off, and that before that his father had worn it for some years on holidays—and thus it developed that his father, Vasily Gorshkov, had been a *government foreman.* And then it was understandable why Fyodor Vasilich liked brick and wood and glass and paint so much—from childhood he had grown up on construction works. But even though the foremen were then called government foremen, and even though they are not called government foremen now, the time they actually became "government foremen" is now, whereas before they were . . . artists.

And Fyodor Vasilich would even now praise the old ways: "What's a construction superintendent nowadays? He isn't able to shift even one kopeck from one place to another. In the old days the contractor would come to the workers on Saturday. 'Well, boys, will it be *before* the bath or *after?*' And they would answer, 'Afterward, uncle, afterward!' 'Well, here's your bath money, and from there to the tavern.' The boys would pour out of the baths in a crowd, and the contractor would be waiting for them with vodka, snacks, and a samovar. . . . Just try after all that to work badly on Monday!"

For us today everything has a name, and we know everything about everything; this was the speedup system, merciless exploitation, playing on the lowest human instincts. And the drinks and the spread that went with them weren't worth what was squeezed out of the worker the following week.

And a bread ration, a wet bread ration, hurled by indifferent hands from the window of the bread-cutting room, now . . . was that really worth any more? . . .

■

So all eight of these classifications of free inhabitants elbowed one another on the crowded square inch of campside: between camp and forest, between forest and swamp, between camp and mine. Eight different categories, various ranks and classes—and all had to fit into that stench-ridden crowded settlement. They

were all "comrades" to each other, and they sent their children to the same school.

The kind of comrades they were was such that, like saints in the clouds, up above everyone else two or three local magnates floated. (In Ekibastuz their names were *Khishchuk* and *Karashchuk*,* the director and the chief engineer of the trust—and I did not think up those names!) And then in descending order, with sharp lines of division carefully observed: the chief of camp, the commander of the convoy battalion, other ranking officials of the trust, and officers of the camp, officers of the battalion, and, in places, the director of the Workers' Supply Section, and, in places, the director of the school (but not the teachers). And the higher they went, the more jealously the walls separating them were guarded, and the greater the significance attached to which woman could go to visit whom, so that they could sit and chew sunflower seeds together. (They were not princesses, nor even countesses, and so they looked around all the more vigilantly to make sure their position had not been degraded!) Oh, what a doomed state it was to live in this narrow world far away from other well-provided-for families living in comfortable, spacious cities. Here everyone knew you, and you couldn't just get up and go to the movies without lowering yourself, and, of course, you could not go to a store. (The more so since they brought the best and the freshest things to your home.) It even seemed improper to keep your own piglet; it was demeaning for the wife of so-and-so to feed it with her own hands! (That is why it was necessary to have a servant from the camp.) And in the several wards of the settlement hospital how difficult it was to keep apart from the tatterdemalions and trash and to lie among decent neighbors. And you had to send your nice children to sit behind the same desks with whom?

But further down, these dividing walls quickly lost their precision and their significance, and there were no longer any troublemaking meddlers to keep watch over them. Further down, the categories inevitably commingled, encountered each other, bought and sold together, ran to get in lines, and argued about the New Year's tree gifts from the trade unions, sat all mixed up together any which way at the movies—both genuine Soviet people and those totally unworthy of this title.

One spiritual center of such settlements was the main "Tea Room" in some rotting barracks near which the trucks lined up

and from which the drunkards, howling out songs, belching and stumbling, wandered around through the whole settlement. And among the very same mud puddles and mass of squshy mud was the second spiritual center—the Club, its floor covered with hulls of spat-out sunflower seeds, scuffed by boots, with a fly-blown wall newspaper from the previous year, with the constantly grumbling loudspeaker over the door, with the good old mother curses at the dances, and the knife fights after the film show. The style and tone of the local places was "Don't be out late," and if you took a girl to a dance, the safest thing to do was to put a horseshoe in your mitten. (Yes, and some of the girls there were such that even a gang of seven youths would flee from them.)

This club was a knife in the officers' hearts. Naturally, it was quite impossible for officers to go to dances in a shed like that among people of that kind. The enlisted men of the guard went there when they were on leave passes. But the trouble was that the young, childless officers' wives were drawn there too, even without their husbands. And they would end up dancing with the enlisted men! Rank-and-file soldiers embraced the officers' wives! So how could you expect faultless obedience from them on duty the next day! After all, this was equality, and no army can stand up under those conditions! Unable to prevent their wives from going to the dances, the officers managed to get the dances declared out of bounds to enlisted men. (Let some dirty "volnyashki" embrace their wives!) But what this did was to introduce a crack in the symmetry of the political indoctrination of the enlisted men: that we are all happy and equal citizens of the Soviet State, and that our enemies are, you see, behind barbed wire.

Many such complex tensions were hidden in campside, and many contradictions among its eight categories. Mingling in everyday life with the repressed and semirepressed, honest Soviet citizens would not neglect to reproach them and put them in their place, especially when it was a matter of a room in a new barracks. And the jailers, as wearers of the MVD uniform, claimed to be on a higher plane than the ordinary free people. And then there were invariably women in everyone's bad books, because all the single guys would have been lost without them. And there were also women who had plans for getting a permanent man. That kind would go to the camp gatehouse when they knew there would be a release—and they would grab complete strangers by

the sleeve: "Come to my place! I have a place, and I will keep you warm. I will buy you a suit! Well, where are you going? After all, they'll just jug you again."

And there was also a security surveillance over the whole settlement. The settlement had its own "godfather." And its own stoolies, and they would flex their muscles: just who was taking letters from the zeks to be mailed outside, and who was selling camp clothing behind the corner of the barracks.

And then, too, of course, there was less sense of the presence of the Law among the inhabitants of campside than anywhere else in the Soviet Union, or that their barracks room was a castle. Some had "unclean" passports, and others had no passports at all, and others had been imprisoned in camp themselves, and others were members of families. And thus all these independent unconvoyed citizens were even more obedient than the prisoners to the command of a man with a rifle, even more meek in the face of the man with a revolver. When they saw one, they did not throw back their proud heads and declare: "You don't have the right!" They would shrink and bow their heads—and slink past.

And this sense of the unlimited power of the bayonet and the uniform hovered so confidently over the expanses of the Archipelago and campside, so communicated itself to everyone who entered the region, that the free woman (P——china) who flew to Krasnoyarsk with her little girl to visit her husband in camp allowed herself to be searched and patted all over at the first demand of the MVD officials in the plane, and allowed her child to be completely undressed. (Since then the little girl has wept every time she has seen the Skyblues.)

But if someone now says that there is nothing sadder than these camp environs and that campside is a sewer, we will reply: That depends on the individual.

A Yakut named Kolodeznikov got three years in 1932 for rustling reindeer, and, under our perspicacious relocation policy, was sent from his native Kolyma to serve his time near Leningrad. He served out his time and was in Leningrad itself, and he brought his family some bright-colored dress materials, yet for many years after complained to his fellow tribesmen and to the zeks who had been sent from Leningrad: "Oh, it's boring where you come from! It's awful!"

Chapter 22

■

We Are Building

After everything that has been said about the camps, the question simply bursts out: That's enough! But was the prisoners' labor profitable to the state? And if it was not profitable—then was it worthwhile undertaking the whole Archipelago?

In the camps themselves both points of view on this were to be found among the zeks, and we used to love to argue about it.

Of course, if one believed the leaders, there was nothing to argue about. On the subject of the use of the prisoners' labor, Comrade Molotov, once the second-ranking man in the state, declared at the Sixth Congress of the Soviets of the U.S.S.R.: "We did this earlier. We are doing it now. And we are going to go on doing it in the future. It is profitable to society. It is useful to the criminals."

Not profitable to the state, note that! But to society itself. And useful to the criminals. And we will go on doing it in the future! So what is there to argue about?

Yes, the entire system of the Stalin decades, when first the construction projects were planned, and only afterward the recruitment of criminals to man them took place, confirms that the government evidently had no doubt of the economic profitability of the camps. Economics went before justice.

But it is quite evident that the question posed needs to be made more precise and to be split into parts:

- Did the camps justify themselves in a political and social sense?
- Did they justify themselves economically?

• Did they pay for themselves (despite the apparent similarity of the second and third questions, there is a difference)?

It is not difficult to answer the first question: For Stalin's purposes the camps were a wonderful place into which he could herd millions as a form of intimidation. And so it appears that they justified themselves politically. The camps were also profitable in lucre to an enormous social stratum—the countless number of camp officers; they gave them "military service" safely in the rear, special rations, pay, uniforms, apartments, and a position in society. Likewise they sheltered throngs of jailers and hard-head guards who dozed atop camp towers (while thirteen-year-old boys were driven into trade schools). And all these parasites upheld the Archipelago with all their strength—as a nest of serf exploitation. They feared a universal amnesty like the plague.

But we have already understood that by no means only those with different ideas, by no means only those who had got off the trodden path marked out by Stalin, were in the camps. The recruitment into camps obviously and clearly exceeded political needs, exceeded the needs of terror. It was proportionate (although perhaps in Stalin's head alone) to economic plans. Yes, and had not the camps (and exile) arisen out of the crisis unemployment of the twenties? From 1930 on, it was not that the digging of canals was invented for dozing camps, but that camps were urgently scraped together for the envisioned canals. It was not the number of genuine "criminals" (or even "doubtful persons") which determined the intensity of the courts' activities —but the requisitions of the economic establishment. At the beginning of the Belomor Canal there was an immediate shortage of Solovetsky Islands zeks, and it became clear that three years was too short and too unprofitable a sentence for the 58's, that they had to serve out two Five-Year plans taken together.

The reason why the camps proved economically profitable had been foreseen as far back as Thomas More, the great-grandfather of socialism, in his *Utopia*. The labor of the zeks was needed for degrading and particularly heavy work, which no one, under socialism, would wish to perform. For work in remote and primitive localities where it would not be possible to construct housing, schools, hospitals, and stores for many years to come. For work with pick and spade—in the flowering of the twentieth

century. For the erection of the great construction projects of socialism, when the economic means for them did not yet exist.

On the great Belomor Canal even an automobile was a rarity. Everything was created, as they say in camp, with "fart power."

On the even larger Moscow-Volga Canal (seven times bigger in scale of work than the Belomor Canal and comparable to the Panama Canal and the Suez Canal), 80 miles of canal were dug to a depth of over sixteen feet and a top width of 280 feet. And almost all of it with pick, shovel, and wheelbarrow.[1] The future bottom of the Rybinsk Sea was covered with forest expanses. All of them were cut down by hand, and nary an electric saw was seen there, and the branches and brushwood were burned by total invalids.

Who, except prisoners, would have worked at logging ten hours a day, in addition to marching four miles through the woods in predawn darkness and the same distance back at night, in a temperature of minus 20, and knowing in a year no other rest days than May 1 and November 7? (Volgolag, 1937.)

And who other than the Archipelago natives would have grubbed out stumps in winter? Or hauled on their backs the boxes of mined ore in the open goldfields of the Kolyma? Or have dragged cut timber a half-mile from the Koin River (a tributary of the Vym) through deep snow on Finnish timber-sledge runners, harnessed up in pairs in a horse collar (the collar bows upholstered with tatters of rotten clothing to make them softer and the horse collar worn over one shoulder)?

True, the authorized journalist Y. Zhukov[2] assures us the Komsomols built the city of Komsomolsk-on-the-Amur (in 1932) thus: They cut down trees without axes, having no smithies, got no bread, and died from scurvy. And he is delighted: Oh, how heroically we built! And would it not be more to the point to be indignant? Who was it, hating their own people, who sent them to build in such conditions? But what's the use of indignation? We, at least, know what kind of "Komsomols" built Komsomolsk. And today they write[3] that those "Komsomols" founded Magadan too!

1. So each time you ride along the canal in a motorboat—remember those who lie on its bottom.
2. *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, November, 1963.
3. *Izvestiya*, July 14, 1964.

And who could be sent down into the Dzhezkazgan mines for a twelve-hour workday of dry drilling? The silicate dust from the ore there floated about in clouds, and there were no masks, and in four months they were sent off to die of irreversible silicosis. Who could be sent down coal mine shafts on lifts without brake shoes, into mine tunnels without pit props, without protection against flooding? For whom alone in the twentieth century was it unnecessary to spend money on wasteful workmen's safety precautions?

And how was it then that the camps were economically unprofitable?

Read, read, in the "The Dead Road" by Pobozhi,[4] that description of how they disembarked from and unloaded the lighters on the Taz River, that Arctic Iliad of the Stalinist epoch: how in the savage tundra, where human foot had never trod, the antlike prisoners, guarded by an antlike convoy, dragged thousands of shipped-in logs on their backs, and built wharves, and laid down rails, and rolled into that tundra locomotives and freight cars which were fated never to leave there under their own power. They slept five hours a day on the bare ground, surrounded by signboards saying, "CAMP COMPOUND."

And he describes further how the prisoners laid a telephone line through the tundra: They lived in lean-tos made of branches and moss, the mosquitoes devoured their unprotected bodies, their clothing never dried out from the swamp mud, still less their footgear. The route had been surveyed hit or miss and poorly laid out (and was doomed to be redrawn); and there was no timber nearby for poles, and they had to go off to either side on two- and three-day expeditions (!) in order to drag in poles from out there.

There was unfortunately no other Pobozhi to tell how before the war another railroad was built—from Kotlas to Vorkuta, where beneath each tie two heads were left. And what kind of a *rail* road was it when before that railroad they laid alongside it a simple road of ties through an impenetrable forest—built by skinny arms, dull axes, and do-nothing bayonets!

Now who would have done that without prisoners? And how on earth could the camps not be profitable?

4. *Novy Mir*, No. 8, 1964, pp. 152–154.

The camps were uniquely profitable in terms of the submissiveness of the slave labor and its cheapness—no, it was not just cheap, it cost nothing, because in antiquity money did have to be paid for a slave, whereas no one paid anything to buy a camp inmate.

Even at the postwar camp conferences, the industrial serf owners admitted that "the Z/K Z/K played a big role in the work in the rear, in the victory."

But no one will ever engrave their forgotten names on a marble tombstone placed over their bones.

How irreplaceable the camps were was discovered in Khrushchev's time, during the bothersome, vociferous Komsomol appeals for volunteers for the virgin lands and construction projects in Siberia.

The question of the camps' *paying for themselves* was, however, a different question. The state's saliva had been flowing over this for a long time. As long ago as the "Statutes on Places of Confinement" in 1921 there had been the plea that "places of confinement must, if possible, pay their way with the labor of the prisoners." From 1922 on, certain local executive committees, going against their worker and peasant character, manifested "tendencies of an apolitical pragmatism," and in particular: not only did they seek to have the places of confinement pay their own way, but they tried in addition to squeeze *profits* out of them for the local budget, to make them self-supporting plus. The Corrective Labor Code of 1924 also demanded that places of confinement be self-supporting. In 1928 at the First All-Union Conference of Penitentiary Executives there was stubborn insistence that there must be an obligatory "reimbursement to the state by the entire network of enterprises of places of confinement of expenditures by the state on these places of confinement."

They so wanted to have their little camps—and free too! From 1929 all the corrective-labor institutions of the country were included in the economic plan. And on January 1, 1931, it was decreed that all camps and colonies in the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic and the Ukraine were to become completely self-supporting.

And what happened next? Instant success, of course! In 1932 the jurists proclaimed triumphantly: "The expenditures on corrective-labor institutions have been *reduced* [this can be believed]

and the conditions in which those deprived of freedom are maintained *are improving with each year* [?]."[5]

We would be surprised, and we would try to find out why this happened and how? If we ourselves hadn't experienced on our own backs just exactly how that maintenance improved later on . . .

But if you come to think about it, it wasn't so very difficult at all! What was required? To make expenditures on camps equal the income from them? The expenditures, as we read, were being reduced. To increase income was even simpler: by squeezing the prisoners! If, in the Solovetsky Islands period of the Archipelago, an official 40 percent discount was applied to forced labor (the assumption being, for some reason, that labor performed under a club was not so productive), then as early as the Belomor Canal, when the "stomach scale" of compensation was introduced, the scholars of Gulag discovered that, on the contrary, forced and hungry labor was the most productive in the world! The Ukrainian Camp Administration, when ordered to become self-supporting in 1931, decided directly: to increase the productivity of labor in the coming year by neither more nor less than 242 percent (two hundred forty-two percent!) in comparison with the preceding years—in other words, by two and a half times, and without any mechanization![6] (And how scientifically this worked out! Two hundred forty and another two percent! The only thing the comrades did not know was: What this is called is *"The Great Leap Forward Beneath Three Red Banners."*)

And you see how Gulag knew in which direction the wind was blowing! Right then was when the immortally historic Six Conditions of Comrade Stalin poured forth—among them *self-support!* But we in Gulag already have it! We already have it! And once again: the use of specialists! But for us this was the easiest of all: to take the engineers off general work! Assign them to posts as work trusties! (The beginning of the thirties was the most privileged period for the technical intelligentsia in the Archipelago; almost none of them were forced to drag out an existence at general work, and even newcomers were immediately

5. Vyshinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 437.
6. Averbakh, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

established in their field of specialization. Up to that time, in the twenties, engineers and technicians perished for nothing on general work because they were not deployed or made use of. After this period, from 1937 right up to the fifties, self-support was forgotten, and all the historic Six Conditions along with it, and the main thing historically then became Vigilance—and the infiltration of the engineers, one by one, into trusty ranks alternated with waves of expelling them all to general work.) Anyway it was cheaper, too, to have a prisoner engineer rather than a free person; no wages had to be paid him! Once again profit, once again self-support! Once again Comrade Stalin was right!

So this line had been drawn out of the distant past, and they had carried it on correctly too: the Archipelago had to cost nothing!

But no matter how they huffed and puffed and broke all their nails on the crags, no matter how they corrected the plan fulfillment sheets twenty times over, and wore them down to holes in the paper, the Archipelago did not pay its own way, and it never will! The income from it would never equal the expenses, and our young workers' and peasants' state (subsequently the elderly state of all the people) is forced to haul this filthy bloody bag along on its back.

And here's why. The first and principal cause was the lack of conscientiousness of the prisoners, the negligence of those stupid slaves. Not only couldn't you expect any socialist self-sacrifice of them, but they didn't even manifest simple capitalist diligence. All they were on the lookout for was ways to spoil their footgear —and not go out to work; how to wreck a crane, to buckle a wheel, to break a spade, to sink a pail—anything for a pretext to sit down and smoke. All that the camp inmates made for their own dear state was openly and blatantly botched: you could break the bricks they made with your bare hands; the paint would peel off the panels; the plaster would fall off; posts would fall down; tables rock; legs fall out; handles come off. Carelessness and mistakes were everywhere. And it could happen that you had to tear off a roof already nailed on, redig the ditch they had filled in, demolish with crowbar and drill a wall they had already built. In the fifties they brought a new Swedish turbine to Steplag. It came in a frame made of logs like a hut. It was winter, and it was cold, and so the cursed zeks crawled into this frame between

the beams and the turbine and started a bonfire to get warm. The silver soldering on the blades melted—and they threw the turbine out. It cost 3,700,000 rubles. Now that's being self-supporting for you!

And in the presence of the zeks—and this was a second reason—the free employees didn't care either, as though they were working not for themselves but for some stranger or other, and they stole a lot, they stole a great, great deal. (They were building an apartment building, and the free employees stole several bathtubs. But the tubs had been supplied to match the number of apartments. So how could they hand over the apartment building as completed? They could not confess to the construction superintendent, of course—he was triumphantly showing the official acceptance committee around the first stair landing, yes, and he did not omit to take them into every bathroom too and show them each tub. And then he took the committee to the second-floor landing, and the third, not hurrying there either, and kept going into all the bathrooms—and meanwhile the adroit and experienced zeks, under the leadership of an experienced foreman plumber, broke bathtubs out of the apartments on the first landing, hauled them upstairs on tiptoe to the fourth floor and hurriedly installed and puttied them in before the committee's arrival. And it was their lookout if they let the wool be pulled over their eyes. . . . This ought to be shown in a film comedy, but they wouldn't allow it: there is nothing funny in our life; everything funny takes place in the West!)

The third cause was the zeks' lack of independence, their inability to live without jailers, without a camp administration, without guards, without a camp perimeter complete with watchtowers, without a Planning and Production Section, a Records and Classification Section, a Security Operations Section, a Cultural and Educational Section, and without higher camp administrations right up to Gulag itself; without censorship, and without penalty isolators, without Strict Regimen Brigades, without trusties, without stockroom clerks and warehouses; their inability to move around without convoy and dogs. And so the state had to maintain at least one custodian for each working native (and every custodian had a family!). Well and good that it was so, but what were all these custodians to live on?

And there were some bright engineers who pointed out a

fourth reason as well: that, so they claimed, the necessity of setting up a perimeter fence at every step, of strengthening the convoy, of allotting a supplementary convoy, interfered with their, the engineers', technical maneuverability, as, for example, during the disembarkation on the River Taz; and because of this, so they claimed, everything was done late and cost more. But this was already an *objective* reason, this was a pretext! Summon them to the Party bureau, give them a good scolding, and the cause will disappear. Let them break their heads; they'll find a solution.

And then, beyond all these reasons, there were the natural and fully condonable miscalculations of the Leadership itself. As Comrade Lenin said: Only the person who does nothing makes no mistakes.

For example, no matter how earth-moving work was planned —rarely did it take place in the summer, but always for some reason in the autumn and winter, in mud and in freezing weather. Or at the Zarosshy Spring in the Shturmovoi goldfields (the Kolyma) in March, 1938, they sent out five hundred people to drive prospecting shafts to a depth of twenty-five to thirty feet in the permafrost. They completed them. (Half the zeks kicked the bucket.) It was time to start blasting, but they changed their minds: the metal content was low. They abandoned it. In May the prospecting shafts thawed, all the work was lost. And two years later, again in March, in the Kolyma frosts, they had another brainstorm: to drive prospecting shafts! In the very same place! Urgently! Don't spare lives!

Well, that's what superfluous expenditures are. . . .

Or, on the Sukhona River near the settlement of Opoki—the prisoners hauled earth and built a dam. And the spring freshets carried it away immediately. And that was that—gone.

Or, for example, the Talaga logging operation of the Archangel administration was given a plan to produce furniture, but the authorities forgot to assign supplies of lumber with which to make the furniture. But a plan is a plan, and has to be fulfilled! Talaga had to send out special brigades to fish driftwood out of the river—logs which had fallen behind the timber rafting. There was not enough. Then, in hit-and-run raids, they began to break up whole rafts and carry them off. But, after all, those rafts belonged to someone else in the plan, and now they wouldn't

have enough. And also it was quite impossible for Talaga to write up work sheets to pay those bold young fellows who had grabbed the timber; after all, it was thievery. So that's what self-support is. . . .

Or once in UstVymlag (in 1943) they wanted to overfulfill the plan for floating individual logs downstream, and brought pressure on the loggers, drove out all those able and unable, and accumulated too much timber in the timber-floating port—260,000 cubic yards. They didn't manage to fish it out before the winter and it froze into the ice. And down below the harbor was a railroad bridge. If the timber did not break up into individual logs in the spring, and if it went off in a mass, it would wipe out the bridge, just like that, and the chief would be tried. And therefore they had to requisition whole carloads of dynamite, sink it to the bottom of the river, blow up the icebound log raft and then drag the logs ashore as quickly as possible—and burn them. (By spring they would not be usable as lumber.) The entire camp was occupied with this work, two hundred persons. For their work in the icy water they received a ration of fat bacon. But none of this could be covered by work vouchers, because it was all superfluous. And the burned-up timber—gone. Now that's what self-support is.

All PechZhelDorlag was engaged in constructing the railroad to Vorkuta—winding every which way. And only afterward did they begin to straighten out the already built road. Who paid for that? And the railroad from Lalsk on the River Luza to Pinyug (they even planned to extend it to Syktyvkar)? In 1938, what enormous camps were driven out there, and they built twenty-eight miles of that railroad—and abandoned it. . . . And so it all went to waste.

Well, of course, these small mistakes are inevitable in any work. No Leader is immune to them.

And all that railroad from Salekhard to Igarka started in 1949—after all, it all turned out to be superfluous. There was nothing there to be hauled on it. And they abandoned it too. But then one quails to say *whose* mistake that was. It was, after all, His Own. . . .

And sometimes they carried this business of self-support to such a length that the camp chief didn't know where to hide from it, how to tie up the loose ends. There was a camp for

invalid zeks at Kacha near Krasnoyarsk (fifteen hundred invalid zeks!), which after the war was told to go over to self-support: to manufacture furniture. And these invalids cut timber with bow saws. (It wasn't a logging camp—and no mechanical equipment was provided.) They hauled the timber to the camp on cows. (Transportation was not provided either, but there was a dairy farm.) The cost of manufacturing a divan turned out to be eight hundred rubles, and its sale price—six hundred! . . . And thus the camp management itself had a material interest in transferring as many invalids as possible into Group 1, or else in classifying them as ill and not sending them out of the compound, for then they would immediately shift from a debit balance on self-support to the reliable state budget.

Due to all these causes not only does the Archipelago not pay its own way, but the nation has to pay dearly for the additional satisfaction of having it.

The economic life of the Archipelago was also complicated by the fact that, even though this great statewide socialist self-support was needed by the entire state, and by Gulag too—yet the chief of camp couldn't care less—so they might scold a bit, pinch off his bonus money (but they would give it to him anyway). The main income, and the main scope, the main convenience and satisfaction for every chief of an individual camp . . . was to have his own independent economy in kind, to have his own cozy little estate, a patrimony. As in the Red Army, so, too, among the MVD officers, not at all as a joke, but very seriously, the circumstantial, respectful, proud, and pleasant word, the "*Master*," developed and established itself firmly. Just as one *Master* stood way up on top above the entire country, so the commander of every individual subdivision necessarily had to be a *Master* too.*

But, given that cruel comb of Groups A, B, C, and D which the merciless Frenkel had stuck forever into Gulag's mane, the Master had to twist and turn cunningly in order to drag through that comb a sufficient number of workers, without whom the economy of his patrimonial manor could in no wise be built. Wherever there was supposed to be one tailor on Gulag tables of organization, it was necessary to construct an entire tailor shop, wherever one shoemaker, a whole shoemaker's shop, and

how many other very useful kinds of craftsmen one would wish to have right at hand! Why, for example, should one not have hothouses, and hothouse greens for the officers' table? Sometimes, even, a wise chief would set up a large auxiliary vegetable farm to feed vegetables over rations even to prisoners too. They would make up for it in work, it was simply quite advantageous for the Master himself, but where could he get the people?

But there was a way out—to overload all those same prisoner sloggers, and to deceive Gulag a little, and to cheat on the work a little too. For large-scale work inside camp, some construction project or other, all the prisoners could be compelled to work Sundays or evenings after their (ten-hour) workdays. For regular work, they inflated the statistics on brigades leaving the camp: workers remaining inside camp were listed as going out of it with their brigades to work. And the brigadiers had to bring back from there *their percentages*, in other words, part of the output stolen from the rest of the brigade members (who even so were not fulfilling the norms). The sloggers worked harder and ate less—but the manor economy grew and strengthened, and the comrade officers had a less monotonous and pleasanter life.

And in certain camps the chief had great breadth of economic vision, and he also found an engineer with imagination—and a powerful "Khozdvor," a complex of workshops, grew in the compound, even with official documentation after a while, even with unconcealed staffs, and accepting industrial assignments for fulfillment. But it could not push its way into the planned supply of materials and tools, and therefore, having nothing, it had to make everything it required itself.

Let us speak about one such Khozdvor—at the Kengir Camp. We won't mention the tailor, furrier, carpentry, and other auxiliary workshops—they are a mere bagatelle. The Kengir Khozdvor had its own foundry, its own metalworking shop, and even—in the middle of the twentieth century—manufactured hand-made drilling and grinding lathes! True, they were unable to manufacture their own turning lathe, but in this *camp lend-lease* was employed: a lathe was stolen in broad daylight from an industrial plant. Here's how it was arranged: They drove up a camp truck and waited till the chief of the plant section left—and then a whole brigade hurled itself on the lathe, dragged it onto the truck, which had no trouble driving right on past the gatehouse guard, because everything had been arranged with the guard—the

guards' battalion was also MVD—and then they drove the lathe right into the camp, and once in there none of the "volnyashki" had access to it. And that was that! What could you get out of the stupid, irresponsible natives? The chief of the section raged and beat his breast—where had the lathe gone? But the zeks knew nothing: What lathe? We didn't see any. And the most important tools arrived in the camp in the same way—but more easily. In the pocket or under overcoat flaps.

The camp workshops once undertook to cast covers for sewer manholes for the ore enrichment factory of Kengir. They could do it, they found. But they ran out of pig iron—and where could the camp procure it in the last resort? So then the prisoners were given orders to steal some first-class English cast-iron brackets (relics of the prerevolutionary concession) *from that very same ore enrichment plant.* In camp these were melted down and carried off to the ore enrichment plant as manhole covers, for which the camp was paid.

And by this time the reader has come to understand how such an energetic "Khozdvor" as this strengthened self-support and also the entire economy of the nation.

And what was there that these camp workshops wouldn't undertake to manufacture—not even Krupp would have undertaken it all. They undertook to make large earthenware pipes for sewage disposal. A windmill. A chaff cutter. Locks. Water pumps. To repair meat grinders. To sew transmission belts. To mend sterilizers for the hospital. To sharpen drills for trepanning the skull. After all, necessity is the mother of invention! When you get good and hungry, you'll figure things out. After all, if you should say, "We aren't able to, we can't do it"—tomorrow they'll drive you out to general work; whereas in the camp workshops things are much more free and easy: no line-up, no marching under convoy, and you can work more slowly, and make something for yourself too. The hospital will pay for an order with two days' "sick leave," the kitchen with "something added," someone else with makhorka, and the management will throw in a little government bread.

And it's funny, and amusing. The engineers were constantly racking their brains: Out of what? How? A piece of suitable iron, found somewhere on the dump, often changed the entire planned design. They made a windmill, and they couldn't find a spring to keep it turned to the wind. They had to tie two strings

to it and give orders to two zeks: When the wind changes, run and turn the mill with the two cords. And they made their own bricks too; with a metal wire, a woman cut a moving strip of clay the length of the future bricks, and they were carried farther on a conveyor which this woman had to keep moving. But with what? After all, her hands were occupied. Oh, immortal inventiveness of cunning zeks! They dreamed up a pair of shafts which hugged the woman's pelvis on either side, and while using her hands to cut the bricks, she simultaneously moved the conveyor belt with a strong and frequent motion of her pelvis back and forth! Alas, we are unable to show the reader a photograph of this.

And the Kengir estate owner finally became convinced for once and for all that there was nothing in the world that his "Khozdvor" could not make. And one day he called in the chief engineer and ordered him to begin the production of glass for windows and carafes immediately. How to make it? They looked in a volume of the encyclopedia lying there. General phrases, no formula. Nonetheless they ordered soda, found quartz sand somewhere, and brought it in. And for the main thing—they asked their friends to bring them broken glass from the "new city under construction." They broke a lot there. They put all this into the stove. They melted it, mixed it, drew it out, and they got sheets of window glass! But at one end it was one centimeter thick and at the other it got as thin as two millimeters. To recognize even a good friend through window glass like that was quite impossible. And the time limit was approaching . . . to show the output to the chief. How does a zek live? One day at a time: If only I can get through today, I will somehow manage tomorrow. And so they stole manufactured window panes from the site, with the glass already cut, brought them to the camp workshops, and showed them to the camp chief. He was satisfied: "Good boys! It's just like the real thing! So now start mass production!" "We can't make any more, Citizen Chief!" "But why not?" "You see, window glass must have molybdenum. We had only a tiny bit and it is all used up." "Can't you get it anywhere?" "Nowhere." "That's too bad. But can you make carafes without that molybdenum?" "We can probably make carafes." "Well, get going." But the carafes, too, all turned out lopsided, and for some reason they all broke apart. A jailer took one of these carafes to get milk, and he was left with just the neck in his hand,

and the milk spilled. "Oh, those bastards!" he cursed. "Wreckers! Fascists! You should all be shot!"

When they were clearing space for new buildings on Ogaryov Street in Moscow and they broke up the old ones, which had stood there for more than a century, not only did they not throw out the floor beams they found there, or even use them for firewood—but they used them for woodwork! They consisted of clean, *ringing* wood. That's what seasoning meant to our great-grandfathers.

We hurry at everything. We never have time for anything. Does anyone think we should wait for beams to season? At Kaluga Gates we used to smear the beams with the latest antiseptics—and the beams rotted all the same, and fungi appeared on them, and so quickly, too, that even before the buildings were officially turned over it was necessary to tear up the floors and replace the rafters as we went.

Therefore, one hundred years from now everything that we zeks built, and in all probability the whole country as well, will not ring like those old beams from Ogaryov Street.

On that day when the U.S.S.R., with trumpets blaring, loosed into the heavens the first artificial earth satellite—opposite my window in Ryazan two pairs of *free* women, dressed in dirty zek pea jackets and padded britches, were carrying cement up to the *fourth floor in hand barrows.*

"True, true, that's so," they will object. "But what can you say? *Nonetheless it orbits!*"

And that you cannot take away from *it*, the devil take it! It orbits!

■

It would be appropriate to finish this chapter with a long list of the projects completed by the prisoners for at least the period from the beginning of the First Stalinist Five-Year Plan up to the time of Khrushchev. But I, of course, am not in a position to compile that list, I can only begin it, so that those desiring to can make the necessary insertions and continue it.

The Belomor Canal (1932)
The Moscow-Volga Canal (1936)
The Volga-Don Canal (1952)

The Kotlas-Vorkuta Railroad, and the branch to Salekhard
The Rikasikha-Molotovsk Railroad[7]
The Salekhard-Igarka Railroad (abandoned)
The Lalsk-Pinyug Railroad (abandoned)
The Karaganda-Mointy-Balkhash Railroad (1936)
The Volga River Right-Bank Railroad
The lateral railroads paralleling the Finnish and Iranian borders
The Trans-Siberian second tracks (1933–1935, about 2,500 miles)
The Taishet-Lena Railroad (the beginning of BAM)
The Komsomolsk–Sovetskaya Gavan Railroad
The Sakhalin Railroad from Pobedino to join the Japanese network
The railroad to Ulan-Bator, and highways in Mongolia[8]
The Minsk-Moscow highway (1937–1938)
The Nogayevo-Atka-Nera highway
Construction of the Kuibyshev Hydroelectric Station
Construction of the Lower Tuloma Hydroelectric Station (near Murmansk)
Construction of the Ust-Kamenogorsk Hydroelectric Station
Construction of the Balkhash Copper Smelting Complex (1934–1935)
Construction of the Solikamsk Paper Combine
Construction of the Berezniki Chemical Complex
Construction of the Magnitogorsk Complex (in part)
Construction of the Kuznetsk Complex (in part)
Construction of factories and open hearths
Construction of the Lomonosov Moscow State University (1950–1953, in part)
Construction of the city of Komsomolsk-on-the-Amur
Construction of the city of Sovetskaya Gavan
Construction of the city of Magadan
Construction of the city of Norilsk
Construction of the city of Dudinka

7. Camps on the Kudma River, on Yagry Island, in the Rikasikha settlement.
8. During the construction of this railroad the unguarded prisoners were ordered to tell the Mongols that they were Komsomol members and volunteers. When the Mongols heard this, they replied: Take back your railroad, give us back our sheep.

Construction of the city of Vorkuta
Construction of the city of Molotovsk (Severodvinsk) (1935 on)
Construction of the city of Dubna
Construction of the port of Nakhodka
Construction of the pipeline from Sakhalin to the mainland
Construction of nearly all the centers of nuclear industry
Mining of radioactive elements (uranium and radium—near Chelyabinsk, Sverdlovsk, and Tura)
Work on isotope separation and enrichment plants (1945–1948)
Radium mining in Ukhta; petroleum refining in Ukhta; the manufacture of heavy water
Coal mining in the basins of the Pechora and the Kuznetsk, of the deposits at Karaganda and Suchan, etc.
Ore mining in Dzhezkazgan, Southern Siberia, Buryat-Mongolia, Shoriya, Khakassiya, and on the Kola Peninsula
Gold mining on the Kolyma, in Chukotka, in Yakutia, on Vaigach Island, in Maikain (Bayan–Aul district)
Apatite mining on the Kola Peninsula (1930 on)
Fluorspar mining in Amderma (1936 on)
Rare-metals mining (the "Stalinskoye" ore deposit in Akmolinsk Province) (up to the fifties)
Timber cutting for export and for internal needs. All the European Russian North and Siberia. We are not able to enumerate the countless logging camps. They constituted half the Archipelago. We will realize this with the very first listing of names: the camps on the River Koin; on the Uftyuga Dvinskaya River; on the River Nem, a tributary of the Vychegda (exiled Germans); on the Vychegda near Ryabova; on the Northern Dvina near Cherevkovo; on the Lesser Northern Dvina near Aristovo. . . .

But is it possible to draw up such a list? . . . On what maps or in whose memory have all these thousands of temporary logging camps been preserved, camps established for one year, for two, for three, until all the woods nearby had been cut, and then removed lock, stock, and barrel? And then why only the logging camps? What about a complete list of all the little islands of the Archipelago which ever surfaced—the famous camps lasting

for decades, and the migratory camps following the line of a construction route, and powerful central prisons for long-termers, and transit camps made of tents and poles? And would anyone undertake to place on such a map all the preliminary detention cells and prisons in each city (several in each)? And then, too, the agricultural colonies with their haying and their herding outposts? And, in addition, the tiny industrial and construction colonies scattered like seeds through the cities? Moscow and Leningrad would each have to have enclaves marked throughout them on a large-scale map. (Do not forget the camp located a quarter-mile from the Kremlin—the beginning of the construction of the Palace of the Soviets.) Yes, and in the twenties the Archipelago was one thing, whereas in the fifties it was quite a different thing and in quite different places. How would one indicate its march through time? How many maps would be required? And Nyroblag, or UstVymlag, or the Solikamsk or the Potma camps would have to be a whole province of crosshatching —but who among us ever walked those boundaries?

But we hope to see such a map yet.

Loading of timber onto ships in Karelia (till 1930; after the appeal of the English press not to accept timber loaded by prisoners, the zeks were hastily taken off this work and removed to the inner depths of Karelia)

Supplying the front during wartime with mines, ammunition, packing for them, and with uniforms

The construction of state farms in Siberia and Kazakhstan

And even leaving out the whole of the twenties, and the output of prisons, reformatories, and corrective-labor prisons, what was it that *the hundreds of industrial colonies* spent their time on, what did they manufacture in the quarter-century from 1929 to 1953? There was no decent city in the whole country that did not have them.

And what did the hundreds and hundreds of agricultural colonies grow and harvest?

It is indeed much easier to enumerate the occupations the prisoners never did have: the manufacture of sausages and confectionary goods.

END OF PART III

PART IV

The Soul and Barbed Wire

■

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

I Corinthians, 15:51*

Chapter 1

■

The Ascent

And the years go by. . . .

Not in swift staccato, as they joke in camp—"winter-summer, winter-summer"—but a long-drawn-out autumn, an endless winter, an unwilling spring, and only a summer that is short. In the Archipelago . . . summer is short.

Even one mere year, whew, how long it lasts! Even in one year how much time is left for you to think! For 330 days you stomp out to line-up in a drizzling, slushy rain, and in a piercing blizzard, and in a biting and still subzero cold. For 330 days you work away at hateful, alien work with your mind unoccupied. For 330 evenings you squinch up, wet, chilled, in the end-of-work line-up, waiting for the convoy to assemble from the distant watchtowers. And then there is the march out. And the march back. And bending down over 730 bowls of gruel, over 730 portions of grits. Yes, and waking up and going to sleep on your multiple bunk. And neither radio nor books to distract you. There are none, and thank God.

And that is only one year. And there are ten. There are twenty-five. . . .

And then, too, when you are lying in the hospital with dystrophy—that, too, is a good time—*to think.*

Think! Draw some conclusions from misfortune.

And all that endless time, after all, the prisoners' brains and souls are not inactive?! In the mass and from a distance they seem like swarming lice, but they are the crown of creation, right? After all, once upon a time a weak little spark of God was

breathed into them too—is it not true? So what has become of it now?

For centuries it was considered that a criminal was given a *sentence* for precisely this purpose, to think about his crime for the whole period of his sentence, be conscience-stricken, repent, and gradually reform.

But the Gulag Archipelago knows no pangs of conscience! Out of one hundred natives—five are thieves, and their transgressions are no reproach in their own eyes, but a mark of valor. They dream of carrying out such feats in the future even more brazenly and cleverly. They have nothing to repent. Another five . . . *stole* on a big scale, but not from people; in our times, the only place where one can steal on a big scale is from the state, which itself squanders the people's money without pity or sense—so what was there for such types to repent of? Maybe that they had not stolen more and divvied up—and thus remained free? And, so far as another 85 percent of the natives were concerned—they had never committed any crimes whatever. What were they supposed to repent of? That they had thought what they thought? (Nonetheless, they managed to pound and muddle some of them to such an extent that they did repent—of being so depraved. . . . Let us remember the desperation of Nina Peregud because she was unworthy of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya.) Or that a man had surrendered and become a POW in a hopeless situation? Or that he had taken employment under the Germans instead of dying of starvation? (Nonetheless, they managed so to confuse what was permitted and what was forbidden that there were some such who were tormented greatly: I would have done better to die than to have earned that bread.) Or that while working for nothing in the collective-farm fields, he had taken a mite to feed his children? Or that he had taken something from a factory for the same reason?

No, not only do you not repent, but your clean conscience, like a clear mountain lake, shines in your eyes. (And your eyes, purified by suffering, infallibly perceive the least haze in other eyes; for example, they infallibly pick out stool pigeons. And the Cheka-GB is not aware of this capacity of ours to see with the eyes of truth—it is our "secret weapon" against that institution. And State Security slips up here with us.)

It was in this nearly unanimous consciousness of our innocence that the main distinction arose between us and the hard-labor prisoners of Dostoyevsky, the hard-labor prisoners of P. Yakubovich. There they were conscious of being doomed renegades, whereas we were confidently aware that they could haul in any free person at all in just the same way they had hauled us in; that barbed wire was only a nominal dividing line between us. In earlier times there had been among the majority . . . the unconditional consciousness of personal guilt, and among us . . . the consciousness of disaster on a mammoth scale.

Just not to perish from the disaster! It had to be survived.

Wasn't this the root cause of the astounding rarity of camp suicides? Yes, rarity, although every ex-prisoner could in all probability recall a case of suicide. But he could recall even more escapes. There were certainly more escapes than suicides! (Admirers of socialist realism can praise me: I am pursuing an optimistic line.) And there were far more self-inflicted injuries, too, than there were suicides! But this, too, is an act indicating love of life—a straightforward calculation of sacrificing a portion to save the whole. I even imagine that, statistically speaking, there were fewer suicides per thousand of the population in camp than in freedom. I have no way of verifying this, of course.

But Skripnikova recalls how a man thirty years old hanged himself in 1931 in the women's toilet in Medvezhyegorsk—and hanged himself on the very day he was to be released! So maybe it was out of a feeling of disgust for the *freedom* of that time? (Two years earlier his wife had abandoned him, but he had not hanged himself then.) Well, the designer Voronov hanged himself in the club of the main camp center of Burepolom. The Communist Party official Aramovich, a second-termer, hanged himself in 1947 in the garret of the machinery-repair factory in Knyazh-Pogost. In Kraslag during the war years Lithuanians who had been reduced to a state of total despair—mainly because nothing in their former lives had prepared them for our cruelties—marched on infantrymen so as to get themselves shot down. In 1949, in the interrogation cell in Vladimir-Volynsk, a young fellow stunned by his interrogation tried to hang himself, but Boronyuk pulled him down in time. At the Kaluga Gates a former Latvian officer who was hospitalized in the camp infirm-

ary began to creep stealthily up some stairs—they led to the incomplete, empty upper stories. The "zechka" nurse saw him and went in pursuit. She caught up with him on the open balcony of the sixth floor. She caught him by the bathrobe, but the suicide slipped off the robe and stepped off into nothingness dressed in his underwear—and flashed past like a white streak of lightning in plain sight of busy Bolshaya Kaluzhskaya Street on a sunny summer day. When Emmi, a German Communist, learned about her husband's death, she left the barracks in subzero weather undressed so as to catch cold. The Englishman Kelly, in the Vladimir Special Purpose Prison, very skillfully cut his veins with the door wide open and the jailer right there on the threshold.[1]

I repeat: there are many others who can recount similar cases —but nonetheless, out of tens of millions who have served time, their total number will be small. Even among these examples, it is clear that a much greater proportion of suicides is accounted for by foreigners, Westerners; for them the transition to the Archipelago . . . was a more shattering blow than for us, so they put an end to it. And suicides were frequent among the loyalists too (but not among the hard-heads). And one can understand why—after all, their heads must have got thoroughly mixed up and filled with incessant buzzing. How could they stand it? (Zosia Zaleska, a Polish noblewoman who had devoted her entire life to the "cause of Communism" by serving in the Soviet intelligence service, tried to commit suicide three times during her interrogation: she tried to hang herself—they pulled her down; she cut her veins—but they stopped her; she jumped onto the window sill on the seventh floor—but the drowsy interrogator managed to grab hold of her by her dress. They saved her life three times—so they could shoot her.)

And, anyway, what is the correct interpretation of suicide? Ans Bernshtein, for example, insists that suicides are not at all cowards, that great will power is required for suicide. He himself wove a rope out of bandages and throttled himself by lifting his feet off the floor. But green circles appeared before his eyes and there was a ringing in his ears—and each time he involun-

1. He did it with a piece of enamel from the washbasin. Kelly hid it in his shoe and his shoe stood by his bed. Kelly dropped his blanket over the shoe to cover it, got out the piece of enamel, and cut his wrist vein beneath the blanket.

tarily put his feet back on the ground. During his last try the homemade rope broke—and he felt glad that he was still alive.

I am not going to dispute that perhaps even in the most extreme despair you still need will power to commit suicide. For a long time I would not have taken it upon myself to pass judgment on this at all. All my life long I was absolutely convinced that I would never consider suicide in any circumstances whatever. But not so long ago I dragged my way through gloomy months when it seemed to me that my whole life's cause had perished, especially if I remained alive. And I remember very clearly indeed the revulsion against life that came over me and the sensation that to die . . . was easier than to live. In my opinion, in a state like that it requires more strength of will to stay alive than to die. But, in all probability, with other people, in a different extremity, this turns out differently. And that is why from time immemorial the two opinions have existed.

It is a very spectacular idea to imagine all the innocently outraged millions beginning to commit suicide en masse, causing double vexation to the government—both by demonstrating their innocence and by depriving the government of free manpower. And maybe the government would have had to soften up and begin to take pity on its subjects?—well, hardly! Stalin wouldn't have been stopped by that. He would have merely picked up another twenty million people from freedom.

But it did not happen! People died by the hundreds of thousands and millions, driven, it would seem, to the extremity of extremities—but for some reason there were no suicides! Condemned to a misshapen existence, to waste away from starvation, to exhaustion from labor—they did not put an end to themselves!

And thinking the whole thing over, I found that proof to be the stronger. A suicide is always a bankrupt, always a human being in a blind alley, a human being who has gambled his life and lost and is without the will to continue the struggle. If these millions of helpless and pitiful vermin still did not put an end to themselves—this meant some kind of invincible feeling was alive inside them. Some very powerful idea.

This was their feeling of universal innocence. It was the sense of an ordeal of the entire people—like the Tatar yoke.

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But what if one has nothing to repent of—what then, what then does the prisoner think about all the time? "Poverty and prison . . . give wisdom." They do. But—where is it to be directed?

Here is how it was with many others, not just with me. Our initial, first prison sky consisted of black swirling storm clouds and black pillars of volcanic eruptions—this was the heaven of Pompeii, the heaven of the Day of Judgment, because it was not just anyone who had been arrested, but I—the center of this world.

Our last prison sky was infinitely high, infinitely clear, even paler than sky-blue.

We all (except religious believers) began from one point: we tried to tear our hair from our head, but our hair had been clipped close! . . . How could we? How could we not have seen those who informed against us?! How could we not have seen our enemies? (And how we hated them! How could we avenge ourselves on them?) And what recklessness! What blindness! How many errors! How can they be corrected? They must be corrected all the more swiftly! We must write. . . . We must speak out. . . . We must communicate. . . .

But—there is nothing that we can do. And nothing is going to save us! At the appropriate time we will sign Form 206. At the appropriate time the tribunal will read us our sentence in our presence, or we will learn it in absentia from the OSO.

Then there begins the period of transit prisons. Interspersed with our thoughts about our future camp, we now love to recall our past: How well we used to live! (Even if we lived badly.) But how many unused opportunities there were! How many flowers we left uncrumpled! . . . When will we now make up for it? If I only manage to survive—oh, how differently, how wisely, I am going to live! The day of our future *release?* It shines like a rising sun!

And the conclusion is: Survive to reach it! Survive! At any price!

This is simply a turn of phrase, a sort of habit of speech: "at any price."

But then the words swell up with their full meaning, and an awesome vow takes shape: to survive *at any price.*

And whoever takes that vow, whoever does not blink before its crimson burst—allows his own misfortune to overshadow both the entire common misfortune and the whole world.

This is the great fork of camp life. From this point the roads go to the right and to the left. One of them will rise and the other will descend. If you go to the right—you lose your life, and if you go to the left—you lose your conscience.

One's own order to oneself, *"Survive!,"* is the natural splash of a living person. Who does not wish to survive? Who does not have the right to survive? Straining all the strength of our body! An order to all our cells: Survive! A powerful charge is introduced into the chest cavity, and the heart is surrounded by an electrical cloud so as not to stop beating. They lead thirty emaciated but wiry zeks three miles across the Arctic ice to a bathhouse. The bath is not worth even a warm word. Six men at a time wash themselves in five shifts, and the door opens straight into the subzero temperature, and four shifts are obliged to stand there before or after bathing—because they cannot be left without convoy. And not only does none of them get pneumonia. They don't even catch cold. (And for ten years one old man had his bath just like that, serving out his term from age fifty to sixty. But then he was released, he was at home. Warm and cared for, he burned up in one month's time. That order—"Survive!"—was not there. . . .)

But simply "to survive" does not yet mean "at any price." "At any price" means: at the price of someone else.

Let us admit the truth: At that great fork in the camp road, at that great divider of souls, it was not the majority of the prisoners that turned to the right. Alas, not the majority. But fortunately neither was it just a few. There are many of them—human beings—who made this choice. But they did not shout about themselves. You had to look closely to see them. Dozens of times this same choice had arisen before them too, but they always knew, and knew their own stand.

Take Arnold Susi, who was sent to camp at the age of about fifty. He had never been a believer, but he had always been fundamentally decent, he had never led any other kind of life—and he was not about to begin any other. He was a "Westerner." And what that meant was that he was doubly unprepared, and kept putting his foot into it all the time, and getting into serious difficulties. He worked at general work. And he was imprisoned

in a penalty camp—and he still managed to survive; he survived as exactly the same kind of person he had been when he came to camp. I knew him at the very beginning, and I knew him . . . afterward, and I can testify personally. True, there were three seriously mitigating circumstances which accompanied him throughout his camp life: He was classified as an invalid. For several years he received parcels. And thanks to his musical abilities, he got some additional nourishment out of amateur theatricals. But these three circumstances only explain why he survived. If they had not existed, he would have died. But he would not have changed. (And perhaps those who died did die because they did not change?)

And Tarashkevich, a perfectly ordinary, straightforward person, recalls: "There were many prisoners prepared to grovel for a bread ration or a puff of makhorka smoke. I was dying, but I kept my soul pure: I always called a spade a spade."

It has been known for many centuries that prison causes the profound rebirth of a human being. The examples are innumerable—such as that of Silvio Pellico: Through serving eight years he was transformed from a furious Carbonaro to a meek Roman Catholic.[2] In our country they always mention Dostoyevsky in this respect. And what about Pisarev? What remained of his revolutionary rebelliousness after imprisonment in the Peter and Paul Fortress? One can certainly debate whether this is good for revolution, but these transformations always proceed in the direction of deepening the soul. Ibsen wrote: "From lack of oxygen even the conscience will wither."[3]

By no means! It is not by any means so simple! In fact, it is the opposite! Take General Gorbatov: He had fought from his very youth, advanced through the ranks of the army, and had no time at all in which to think about things. But he was imprisoned, and how good it was—various events awakened within his recollection, such as his having suspected an innocent man of espionage; or his having ordered by mistake the execution of a quite innocent Pole.[4] (Well, when else would he have remembered this? After rehabilitation he did not remember such things very much?) Enough has been written about prisoners' changes

2. S. Pellico, *Moi Temnitsy* (*My Prisons*), St. Petersburg, 1836.
3. Henrik Ibsen, *An Enemy of the People.*
4. *Novy Mir*, 1964, No. 4.

of heart to raise it to the level of penological theory. For example, in the prerevolutionary *Prison Herald* Luchenetsky wrote: "Darkness renders a person more sensitive to light; involuntary inactivity in imprisonment arouses in him a thirst for life, movement, work; the quiet compels profound pondering over his own 'I,' over surrounding conditions, over his own past and present, and forces him to think about his future."

Our teachers, who had never served time themselves, felt for prisoners only the natural sympathy of the outsider; Dostoyevsky, however, who served time himself, was a proponent of punishment! And this is something worth thinking about.

The proverb says: "Freedom spoils, and lack of freedom teaches."

But Pellico and Luchenetsky wrote about *prison.* But Dostoyevsky demanded punishment—in prison. But *what kind of* lack of freedom is it that educates?

Camp?

That is something to think about.

Of course, in comparison with prison our camps are poisonous and harmful.

Of course, they were not concerned with our souls when they pumped up the Archipelago. But nonetheless: is it really hopeless to stand fast in camp?

And more than that: was it really impossible for one's soul to rise in camp?

Here is E.K., who was born around 1940, one of those boys who, under Khrushchev, gathered to read poems on Mayakovsky Square, but were hauled off instead in Black Marias. From camp, from a Potma camp, he writes to his girl: "Here all the trivia and fuss have decreased. . . . I have experienced a turning point. . . . Here you harken to that voice deep inside you, which amid the surfeit and vanity used to be stifled by the roar from outside."

At the Samarka Camp in 1946 a group of intellectuals had reached the very brink of death: They were worn down by hunger, cold, and work beyond their powers. And they were even deprived of sleep. They had nowhere to lie down. Dugout barracks had not yet been built. Did they go and steal? Or squeal? Or whimper about their ruined lives? No! Foreseeing the approach of death in days rather than weeks, here is how they spent their last sleepless leisure, sitting up against the wall:

Timofeyev-Ressovsky gathered them into a "seminar," and they hastened to share with one another what one of them knew and the others did not—they delivered their last lectures to each other. Father Savely—spoke of "unshameful death," a priest academician—about patristics, one of the Uniate fathers—about something in the area of dogmatics and canonical writings, an electrical engineer—on the principles of the energetics of the future, and a Leningrad economist—on how the effort to create principles of Soviet economics had failed for lack of new ideas. Timofeyev-Ressovsky himself talked about the principles of microphysics. From one session to the next, participants were missing—they were already in the morgue.

That is the sort of person who can be interested in all this while already growing numb with approaching death—now that is an intellectual!

Pardon me, you . . . love life? You, you! You who exclaim and sing over and over and dance it too: "I love you, life! Oh, I love you, life!" Do you? Well, go on, love it! Camp life—love that too! It, too, is life!

> There where there is no struggle with fate,
> There you will resurrect your soul. . . .

You haven't understood a thing. When you get there, you'll collapse.

Along our chosen road are twists and turns and twists and turns. Uphill? Or up into the heavens? Let's go, let's stumble and stagger.

The day of liberation! What can it give us after so many years? We will change unrecognizably and so will our near and dear ones—and places which once were dear to us will seem stranger than strange.

And the thought of freedom after a time even becomes a forced thought. Farfetched. Strange.

The day of "liberation"! As if there were any liberty in this country! Or as if it were possible to liberate anyone who has not first become liberated in his own soul.

The stones roll down from under our feet. Downward, into the past! They are the ashes of the past!

And we ascend!

■

It is a good thing *to think* in prison, but it is not bad in camp either. Because, and this is the main thing, there are no *meetings.* For ten years you are free from all kinds of meetings! Is that not mountain air? While they openly claim your labor and your body, to the point of exhaustion and even death, the camp keepers do not encroach at all on your thoughts. They do not try to screw down your brains and to fasten them in place.[5] And this results in a sensation of freedom of much greater magnitude than the freedom of one's feet to run along on the level.

No one tries to persuade you *to apply* for Party membership. No one comes around to squeeze membership dues out of you in *voluntary* societies. There is no trade union—the same kind of protector of your interests as an official lawyer before a tribunal. And there are no "production meetings." You cannot be elected to any position. You cannot be appointed some kind of delegate. And the really important thing is . . . that they cannot compel you to be a propagandist. Nor—to listen to propaganda. Nor—when someone jerks the string, to shout: "We demand! . . . We will not permit! . . ." Nor—will they ever drag you off to the electoral precinct to vote freely and secretly for a single candidate. No one requires any "socialist undertakings" of you. Nor—self-criticism of your mistakes. Nor—articles in the wall newspaper. Nor—an interview with a provincial correspondent.

A free head—now is that not an advantage of life in the Archipelago?

And there is one more freedom: No one can deprive you of your family and property—you have already been deprived of them. What does not exist—not even God can take away. And this is a basic freedom.

It is good to think in imprisonment. And the most insignificant cause gives you a push in the direction of extended and important thoughts. Once in a long, long while, once in three years maybe, they brought a movie to camp. The film turned out to be—the cheapest kind of "sports" comedy—*The*

5. Except for the unfortunate period of the White Sea–Baltic Canal and the Moscow-Volga Canal.

*First Glove.** It was a bore. But from the screen they kept drumming into the audience the moral of the film:

The result is what counts, and the result is not in your favor.

On the screen they kept laughing. In the hall the audience kept laughing too. But blinking as you came out into the sunlit camp yard, you kept thinking about this phrase. And during the evening you kept thinking about it on your bunk. And Monday morning out in line-up. And you could keep thinking about it as long as you wanted. And where else could you have concentrated on it like that? And slow clarity descended into your brain.

This was no joke. This was an infectious thought. It has long since been inculcated in our Fatherland—and they keep on inculcating it over and over. The concept that only the material result counts has become so much a part of us that when, for example, some Tukhachevsky, Yagoda, or Zinoviev was proclaimed . . . a traitor who had sidled up to the enemy, people only exclaimed in a chorus of astonishment: *"What more could he want?"*

Now that is a high moral plane for you! Now that is a real unit of measure for you! "What more could he want?" Since he had a belly full of chow, and twenty suits, and two country homes, and an automobile, and an airplane, and fame—what more could he want?!! Millions of our compatriots find it unthinkable to imagine that a human being (and I am not speaking here of this particular trio) might have been motivated by something other than material gain!

To such an extent has everyone been indoctrinated with and absorbed the slogan: "The result is what counts."

Whence did this come to us?

In the first place—from the glory of our banners and the so-called "honor of our Motherland." We choked, cut down, and cut up all our neighbors in our expansion—and in our Fatherland it became well established that: The result is what counts.

And then from our Demidovs, Kabans and Tsybukins. They clambered up, without looking behind them to see whose ears they were smashing with their jackboots. And ever more firmly it became established among a once pious and openhearted people: The result is what counts.

And then—from all kinds of socialists, and most of all from the most modern, infallible, and intolerant Teaching, which consists of this one thing only: The result is what counts! It is important to forge a fighting Party! And to seize power! And to hold on to power! And to remove all enemies! And to conquer in pig iron and steel! And to launch rockets!

And though for this industry and for these rockets it was necessary to sacrifice the way of life, and the integrity of the family, and the spiritual health of the people, and the very soul of our fields and forests and rivers—to hell with them! The result is what counts!!!

But that is a lie! Here we have been breaking our backs for years at All-Union hard labor. Here in slow annual spirals we have been climbing up to an understanding of life—and from this height it can all be seen so clearly: It is not the result that counts! It is not the result—but *the spirit!* Not *what*—but *how*. Not what has been attained—but at what price.

And so it is with us the prisoners—if it is the result which counts, then it is also true that one must survive at any price. And what that means is: One must become a stool pigeon, betray one's comrades. And thereby get oneself set up comfortably. And perhaps even get time off sentence. In the light of the Infallible Teaching there is, evidently, nothing reprehensible in this. After all, if one does that, then the result will be in our favor, and the result is what counts.

No one is going to argue. It is pleasant to win. But not at the price of losing one's human countenance.

If it is the result which counts—you must strain every nerve and sinew to avoid *general work*. You must bend down, be servile, act meanly—yet hang on to your position as a trusty. And by this means . . . survive.

If it is the essence that counts, then the time has come to reconcile yourself to *general work*. To tatters. To torn skin on the hands. To a piece of bread which is smaller and worse. And perhaps . . . to death. But while you're alive, you drag your way along proudly with an aching back. And that is when—when you have ceased to be afraid of threats and are not chasing after rewards—you become the most dangerous character in the owl-like view of the bosses. Because . . . what hold do they have on you?

You even begin to like carrying hand barrows with rubbish (yes, but not with stone!) and discussing with your work mate how the movies influence literature. You begin to like sitting down on the empty cement mixing trough and lighting up a smoke next to your bricklaying. And you are actually and simply proud if, when the foreman passes you, he squints at your courses, checks their alignment with the rest of the wall, and says: "Did you lay that? Good line."

You need that wall like you need a hole in the head, nor do you believe it is going to bring closer the happy future of the people, but, pitiful tattered slave that you are, you smile at this creation of your own hands.

The Anarchist's daughter, Galya Venediktova, worked as a nurse in the Medical Section, but when she saw that what went on there was *not healing* but only the business of getting fixed up in a good spot—out of stubbornness she left and went off to general work, taking up a spade and a sledge hammer. And she says that this saved her spiritually.

For a good person even a crust is healthy food, and to an evil person even meat brings no benefit.

(Now that is no doubt how it really is—but what if there is not even a crust? . . .)

■

And as soon as you have renounced that aim of "surviving at any price," and gone where the calm and simple people go—then imprisonment begins to transform your former character in an astonishing way. To transform it in a direction most unexpected to you.

And it would seem that in this situation feelings of malice, the disturbance of being oppressed, aimless hate, irritability, and nervousness ought to multiply.[6] But you yourself do not notice how, with the impalpable flow of time, slavery nurtures in you the shoots of contradictory feelings.

6. The revolutionaries of the past left many traces of this. Serafimovich, in one of his stories, describes the society of the exiles in this way. The Bolshevik Olminsky writes: "Bitterness and spite—these feelings are so familiar to the prisoner, so close to his soul." He used to pour out his anger on those who came to visit him. He writes that he lost all taste for work too. But then the Russian revolutionaries (in the overwhelming mass) did not get and did not serve out any *real* (long) sentences.

Once upon a time you were sharply intolerant. You were constantly in a rush. And you were constantly short of time. And now you have time with interest. You are surfeited with it, with its months and its years, behind you and ahead of you—and a beneficial calming fluid pours through your blood vessels—patience.

You are ascending. . . .

Formerly you never forgave anyone. You judged people without mercy. And you praised people with equal lack of moderation. And now an understanding mildness has become the basis of your uncategorical judgments. You have come to realize your own weakness—and you can therefore understand the weakness of others. And be astonished at another's strength. And wish to possess it yourself.

The stones rustle beneath our feet. We are ascending. . . .

With the years, armor-plated restraint covers your heart and all your skin. You do not hasten to question and you do not hasten to answer. Your tongue has lost its flexible capacity for easy oscillation. Your eyes do not flash with gladness over good tidings nor do they darken with grief.

For you still have to verify whether that's how it is going to be. And you also have to work out—what is gladness and what is grief.

And now the rule of your life is this: Do not rejoice when you have found, do not weep when you have lost.

Your soul, which formerly was dry, now ripens from suffering. And even if you haven't come to love your neighbors in the Christian sense, you are at least learning to love those close to you.

Those close to you in spirit who surround you in slavery. And how many of us come to realize: It is particularly in slavery that for the first time we have learned to recognize genuine friendship!

And also those close to you in blood, who surrounded you in your former life, who loved you—while you played the tyrant over them . . .

Here is a rewarding and inexhaustible direction for your thoughts: Reconsider all your previous life. Remember everything you did that was bad and shameful and take thought—can't you possibly correct it now?

Yes, you have been imprisoned for nothing. You have nothing to repent of before the state and its laws.

But . . . before your own conscience? But . . . in relation to other individuals?

. . . Following an operation, I am lying in the surgical ward of a camp hospital. I cannot move. I am hot and feverish, but nonetheless my thoughts do not dissolve into delirium—and I am grateful to Dr. Boris Nikolayevich Kornfeld, who is sitting beside my cot and talking to me all evening. The light has been turned out—so it will not hurt my eyes. He and I—and there is no one else in the ward.

Fervently he tells me the long story of his conversion from Judaism to Christianity. This conversion was accomplished by an educated, cultivated person, one of his cellmates, some good-natured old fellow like Platon Karatayev. I am astonished at the conviction of the new convert, at the ardor of his words.

We know each other very slightly, and he was not the one responsible for my treatment, but there was simply no one here with whom he could share his feelings. He was a gentle and well-mannered person. I could see nothing bad in him nor did I know anything bad about him. However, I was on guard because Kornfeld had now been living for two months in the hospital barracks without going outside, because he had shut himself up in here, at his place of work, and avoided moving around camp at all.

This meant . . . he was afraid of having his throat cut. In our camp it had recently become fashionable—to cut the throats of stool pigeons. This has an effect. But who could guarantee that only stoolies were getting their throats cut? One prisoner had had his throat cut in a clear case of settling a sordid grudge. And therefore . . . the self-imprisonment of Kornfeld in the hospital did not yet prove at all that he was a stool pigeon.

It is already late. All the hospital is asleep. Kornfeld is ending up his story thus:

"And on the whole, do you know, I have become convinced that there is no punishment that comes to us in this life on earth which is undeserved. Superficially it can have nothing to do with what we are guilty of in actual fact, but if you go over your life with a fine-tooth comb and ponder it deeply, you will always be able to hunt down that transgression of yours for which you have now received this blow."

I cannot see his face. Through the window come only the scattered reflections of the lights of the perimeter outside. And the door from the corridor gleams in a yellow electrical glow. But there is such mystical knowledge in his voice that I shudder.

These were the last words of Boris Kornfeld. Noiselessly he went out into the nighttime corridor and into one of the nearby wards and there lay down to sleep. Everyone slept. And there was no one with whom he could speak even one word. And I went off to sleep myself.

And I was wakened in the morning by running about and tramping in the corridor; the orderlies were carrying Kornfeld's body to the operating room. He had been dealt eight blows on the skull with a plasterer's mallet while he still slept. (In our camp it was the custom to kill immediately after rising time, when the barracks were all unlocked and open and when no one yet had got up, when no one was stirring.) And he died on the operating table, without regaining consciousness.

And so it happened that Kornfeld's prophetic words were his last words on earth. And, directed to me, they lay upon me as an inheritance. You cannot brush off that kind of inheritance by shrugging your shoulders.

But by that time I myself had matured to similar thoughts.

I would have been inclined to endow his words with the significance of a universal law of life. However, one can get all tangled up that way. One would have to admit that on that basis those who had been punished even more cruelly than with prison —those shot, burned at the stake—were some sort of super-evildoers. (And yet . . . the innocent are those who get punished most zealously of all.) And what would one then have to say about our so evident torturers: Why does not fate punish *them?* Why do they prosper?

(And the only solution to this would be that the meaning of earthly existence lies not, as we have grown used to thinking, in prospering, but . . . in the development of the soul. From *that* point of view our torturers have been punished most horribly of all: they are turning into swine, they are departing downward from humanity. From that point of view punishment is inflicted on those whose development . . . *holds out hope.*)

But there was something in Kornfeld's last words that touched a sensitive chord, and that I accept quite completely *for myself.* And many will accept the same for themselves.

In the seventh year of my imprisonment I had gone over and re-examined my life quite enough and had come to understand why everything had happened to me: both prison and, as an additional piece of ballast, my malignant tumor. And I would not have murmured even if all that punishment had been considered inadequate.

Punishment? But . . . whose?

Well, just think about that—*whose?*

I lay there a long time in that recovery room from which Kornfeld had gone forth to his death, and all alone during sleepless nights I pondered with astonishment my own life and the turns it had taken. In accordance with my established camp custom I set down my thoughts in rhymed verses—so as to remember them. And the most accurate thing is to cite them here—just as they came from the pillow of a hospital patient, when the hard-labor camp was still shuddering outside the windows in the wake of a revolt.

When was it that I completely
Scattered the good seeds, one and all?
For after all I spent my boyhood
In the bright singing of Thy temples.

Bookish subtleties sparkled brightly,
Piercing my arrogant brain,
The secrets of the world were . . . in my grasp,
Life's destiny . . . as pliable as wax.

Blood seethed—and every swirl
Gleamed iridescently before me,
Without a rumble the building of my faith
Quietly crumbled within my heart.

But passing here between being and nothingness,
Stumbling and clutching at the edge,
I look behind me with a grateful tremor
Upon the life that I have lived.

Not with good judgment nor with desire
Are its twists and turns illumined.
But with the even glow of the Higher Meaning
Which became apparent to me only later on.

And now with measuring cup returned to me,
Scooping up the living water,
God of the Universe! I believe again!
Though I renounced You, You were with me!

Looking back, I saw that for my whole conscious life I had not understood either myself or my strivings. What had seemed for so long to be beneficial now turned out in actuality to be fatal, and I had been striving to go in the opposite direction to that which was truly necessary to me. But just as the waves of the sea knock the inexperienced swimmer off his feet and keep tossing him back onto the shore, so also was I painfully tossed back on dry land by the blows of misfortune. And it was only because of this that I was able to travel the path which I had always really wanted to travel.

It was granted me to carry away from my prison years on my bent back, which nearly broke beneath its load, this essential experience: *how* a human being becomes evil and *how* good. In the intoxication of youthful successes I had felt myself to be infallible, and I was therefore cruel. In the surfeit of power I was a murderer, and an oppressor. In my most evil moments I was convinced that I was doing good, and I was well supplied with systematic arguments. And it was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart—and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of all hearts, there remains . . . an unuprooted small corner of evil.

Since then I have come to understand the truth of all the religions of the world: They struggle with the *evil inside a human being* (inside every human being). It is impossible to expel evil from the world in its entirety, but it is possible to constrict it within each person.

And since that time I have come to understand the falsehood of all the revolutions in history: They destroy only *those carriers* of evil contemporary with them (and also fail, out of

haste, to discriminate the carriers of good as well). And they then take to themselves as their heritage the actual evil itself, magnified still more.

The Nuremberg Trials have to be regarded as one of the special achievements of the twentieth century: they killed the very idea of evil, though they killed very few of the people who had been infected with it. (Of course, Stalin deserves no credit here. He would have preferred to explain less and shoot more.) And if by the twenty-first century humanity has not yet blown itself up and has not suffocated itself—perhaps it is this direction that will triumph?

Yes, and if it does not triumph—then all humanity's history will have turned out to be an empty exercise in marking time, without the tiniest mite of meaning! Whither and to what end will we otherwise be moving? To beat the enemy over the head with a club—even cavemen knew that.

"Know thyself!" There is nothing that so aids and assists the awakening of omniscience within us as insistent thoughts about one's own transgressions, errors, mistakes. After the difficult cycles of such ponderings over many years, whenever I mentioned the heartlessness of our highest-ranking bureaucrats, the cruelty of our executioners, I remember myself in my captain's shoulder boards and the forward march of my battery through East Prussia, enshrouded in fire, and I say: "So were *we* any better?"

When people express vexation, in my presence, over the West's tendency to crumble, its political shortsightedness, its divisiveness, its confusion—I recall too: "Were we, before passing through the Archipelago, more steadfast? Firmer in our thoughts?"

And that is why I turn back to the years of my imprisonment and say, sometimes to the astonishment of those about me: *"Bless you, prison!"*

Lev Tolstoi was right when he *dreamed* of being put in prison. At a certain moment that giant began to dry up. He actually needed prison as a drought needs a shower of rain!

All the writers who wrote about prison but who did not themselves serve time there considered it their duty to express sympathy for prisoners and to curse prison. I . . . have served enough

time there. I nourished my soul there, and I say without hesitation:

"*Bless you, prison,* for having been in my life!"

(And from beyond the grave come replies: It is very well for you to say that—when you came out of it alive!)

Chapter 2

■

Or Corruption?

But I have been brought up short: You are *not talking about the subject* at all! You have got off the track again—onto prison! And what you are supposed to be talking about is *camp*.

But I was also, I thought, talking about camp. Well, all right, I'll shut up. I shall give some space to contrary opinions. Many camp inmates will object to what I have said and will say that they did not observe any "ascent" of the soul, that this is nonsense, and that corruption took place at every step.

More insistent and more significant than others (because he had already written about all this) was Shalamov's objection:

> In the camp situation human beings never remain human beings—the camps were created to this end.
>
> All human emotions—love, friendship, envy, love of one's fellows, mercy, thirst for fame, honesty—fell away from us along with the meat of our muscles. . . . We had no pride, no vanity, and even jealousy and passion seemed to be Martian concepts. . . . The only thing left was anger—the most enduring of human emotions.
>
> We came to understand that truth and falsehood were kin sisters.
>
> Friendship is born neither of need nor of misfortune. If friendship does arise between human beings—it means that conditions are not that difficult. If misfortune and need have joined hands—it means they were not *in extremis*. Grief is insufficiently sharp and deep if it can be shared with friends.

There is only one distinction here to which Shalamov agrees:

Ascent, growth in profundity, the development of human beings, is possible in *prison.* But

> . . . camp—is wholly and consistently a negative school of life. There is nothing either necessary or useful that anyone derives from it. The prisoner learns flattery, falsehood, and petty and large-scale meanness. . . . When he returns home, he sees not only that he has not grown during his time in camp, but that his interests have become meager and crude.[1]

Y. Ginzburg also agrees with this distinction: "Prison ennobled people, while camp corrupted them."

And how can one object to that?

In prison, both in solitary confinement and outside solitary too, a human being confronts his grief face to face. This grief is a mountain, but he has to find space inside himself for it, to familiarize himself with it, to digest it, and it him. This is the highest form of moral effort, which has always ennobled every human being.[2] A duel with years and with walls constitutes moral work and a path upward (if you can climb it). If you share those years with a comrade, it is never in a situation in which you are called on to die in order to save his life, nor is it necessary for him to die in order for you to survive. You have the possibility of entering not into conflict but into mutual support and enrichment.

But in camp, it would appear, you do not have that path. Bread is not issued in equal pieces, but thrown onto a pile—go grab! Knock down your neighbors, and tear it out of their hands! The quantity of bread issued is such that one or two people have to die for each who survives. The bread is hung high up on a pine tree—go fell it. The bread is deposited in a coal mine—go down and mine it. Can you think about your own

1. Shalamov also considers it an indication of the human being's oppression and corruption in camp that he "lives there for long years subject to someone else's will, to someone else's mind." But this is something I have chosen to set aside in a footnote—because, in the first place, one can say just the same thing about many free people (not counting the scope for activity in minor details which prisoners have as well), and because, in the second place, the fatalistic character obligatorily instilled into the native of the Archipelago by his ignorance of his fate and his inability to influence it tends rather to ennoble him, to free him from fruitless bustle.

2. How interesting people become in prison! I have known people who became tiresome bores after their release, yet in prison you simply couldn't tear yourself away from conversations with them.

grief, about the past and the future, about humanity and God? Your mind is absorbed in vain calculations which for the present moment cut you off from the heavens—and tomorrow are worth nothing. You *hate* labor—it is your principal enemy. You hate your companions—rivals in life and death.[3] You are reduced to a frazzle by intense *envy* and alarm lest somewhere behind your back others are right now dividing up that bread which could be yours, that somewhere on the other side of the wall a tiny potato is being ladled out of the pot which could have ended up in your own bowl.

Camp life was organized in such a way that envy pecked at your soul from all sides, even the best-defended soul. Envy also extended to *terms* and to *release* itself. In 1945 we, the 58's, had to see the nonpolitical offenders off at the gates (as a result of Stalin's amnesty). What were our feelings toward them? Gladness for them because they were going home? No, it was envy because it was unjust to free them and to hold us. And V. Vlasov, who got a twenty-year term, served out his first ten years calmly, for who was not serving out ten years? But in 1947–1948 they began to release many others—and he envied them, got nervous, and was eating his heart out: How was it that he had received a sentence of twenty? How galling it was to have to serve that second tenner! (And I did not ask him, but I suppose that when these others began to return to camp as *repeaters*, he then must have calmed down.) And in 1955–1956 the 58's were being released on a mass scale, and the nonpolitical offenders were left in the camps. What did they feel at that point? A sense of justice because the long-suffering article, after forty years of incessant persecutions, had at long last been pardoned? No, in fact, there was universal *envy* (I received many letters of this sort in 1963): they had freed "the enemies who were far worse than us habitual criminals." And why then are we still here? For what?

And in addition you are constantly gripped by *fear*: of slipping off even that pitifully low level to which you are clinging, of losing your work which is still not the hardest, of coming a cropper on a prisoner transport, of ending up in a Strict Regimen Camp. And on top of that, you got beaten if you were weaker

3. P. Yakubovich declared: "Nearly every hard-labor convict dislikes every other one." Yet where he was there was no competition for survival.

than all the rest, or else you yourself beat up those weaker than you. And wasn't this corruption? *Soul mange* is what A. Rubailo, an old camp veteran, called this swift decay under external pressure.

Amid these vicious feelings and tense petty calculations, when and on what foundation could you ascend?

Chekhov, even before our Corrective Labor Camps, observed and identified this soul corruption on Sakhalin. He wrote correctly that the vices of prisoners arose from their lack of freedom, enslavement, terror, and constant hunger. And their vices were dishonesty, slyness, cowardice, faintheartedness, stool-pigeoning, thievery. Experience had demonstrated to the hard-labor convict that in the struggle for existence deceit was the most reliable means.

And wasn't all this multiplied tenfold among us? So isn't it the right time not to object, and not to rise to the defense of some sort of alleged camp "ascent," but to describe hundreds, thousands of cases of genuine soul corruption? To cite examples of how no one could resist the camp philosophy of Yashka, the Dzhezkazgan work assigner: "The more you spit on people, the more they'll esteem you." To tell how newly arrived front-line soldiers (in Kraslag in 1942) had no sooner scented the thieves' atmosphere than they themselves undertook *to play the thief—to plunder* the Lithuanians and to fatten up off their foodstuffs and possessions: You greenhorns can go die! Or how certain Vlasov men began *to pass for thieves* out of the conviction that that was the only way to survive in camp. Or about that assistant professor of literature who became a thief Ringleader. Or to be astounded—via the example of Chulpenyov—at how infectious that camp ideology was. Chulpenyov stood it for seven years on general work at timbering and became a famous lumberjack, but landed in a hospital with a broken leg, and was subsequently offered a position as a work assigner. He had no need for this job. He could certainly have dragged out as a lumberjack the two and a half years he had still to serve since the management made a great fuss over him—but how could he turn down the temptation? After all, it is a rule of camp philosophy: "If they give, take it!" And Chulpenyov became a work assigner for just six months, which were the most restless, troubled, and dismal of his whole term. (And it is now a long time since his term was

served out, and he will tell you with an openhearted smile about the tall pines—but there is a stone on his heart because of those who died as a result of his *slave-driving:* a Latvian six and a half feet tall, a captain who had sailed the seven seas—yes, and was he the only one?)

Conscious instigation of one prisoner against another can lead to just such awful "soul mange"! In Unzhlag in 1950, Moiseyevaite, who, even though she was touched in the head, was still being marched to and from work under convoy, paid no attention to the convoy and went off to look for "her mother." She was seized, tied to a post at the gatehouse, and it was announced that "because of her escape attempt" the whole camp would be deprived of the next Sunday (a standard trick)! And therefore as the brigades returned from work they spat at the trussed-up woman, and some even struck her: "Because of you, bitch, we don't have a rest day." Moiseyevaite only smiled benignly.

And how much corruption was introduced by that democratic and progressive system of "trusty watchmen"—which in our zek terminology became converted to *self-guarding*—introduced back in 1918? After all, this was one of the main streams of camp corruption: the enlistment of prisoners in the trusty guards! You—had fallen. You—were punished. You—had been uprooted from life—but you want to avoid the very bottom of the pile? You want to hover over someone else, rifle in hand? Over your brother? Here! Take it! And if he runs—shoot him! We will even call you *comrade.* And we will give you a Red Army man's ration.

And . . . he grows proud. And . . . he tightens his grip on his gun stock. And . . . he shoots. And . . . he is even more severe than the free guards. (How is one to understand this: Was it really a purblind faith in social initiative? Or was it just an icy, contemptuous calculation based on the lowest human feelings?)

After all, it was not just a matter of "self-guarding" either. There were also "self-supervision," and "self-oppression"—right up to the situation in the thirties when all of them, all the way up to the camp chief, were zeks. Including the transport chief. The production chief. (And how could it have been otherwise anyway—when there were only thirty-seven Chekists to 100,000 zeks on the White Sea–Baltic Canal?) Yes, and even *security chiefs* were zeks too. One could not have carried "self-supervi-

sion" any further than that: The zeks were conducting interrogations of themselves. They were recruiting stool pigeons to denounce themselves.

Yes, yes. But I am not going to examine those countless cases of corruption here. They are well known to everyone. They have already been described, and they will be described again. It is quite enough to admit they took place. This is the general trend, this is as it should be.

Why repeat about each and every house that in subzero weather it loses its warmth? It is much more surprising to note that there are houses which retain their warmth even in subzero weather.

Shalamov says: Everyone imprisoned in camp was spiritually impoverished. But whenever I recall or encounter a former zek, I find a real personality.

Elsewhere Shalamov himself writes that he wouldn't betray other zeks! He wouldn't become a brigadier and compel others to work.

Why is that, Varlam Tikhonovich? Why is it that out of a clear sky it appears that you would refuse to become either a stoolie or a brigadier—if it is the case that no one in camp can avoid or sidestep that slippery slope of corruption? Given the fact that truth and falsehood . . . are kin sisters? Does it mean that you did nonetheless grasp at some branch sticking out? Does it mean that you found a footing on some stone—and did not slide down any further? And maybe, despite everything, anger is not really the most long-lived feeling there is? Do you not refute your own concept with your character and verses?[4]

And how is it that genuine religious believers survived in camp (as we mentioned more than once)? In the course of this book we have already mentioned their self-confident procession through the Archipelago—a sort of silent religious procession with invisible candles. How some among them were mowed down by machine guns and those next in line continued their march. A steadfastness unheard of in the twentieth century! And it was

4. Alas, he decided not to refute it. . . . As if out of stubbornness, he continued this argument. . . . On February 23, 1972, in the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, he published a renunciation (for some reason now that all the threats have passed): "The problematics of the *Kolyma Stories* have long since been crossed out by life." This renunciation was printed in a black mourning frame, and thus all of us understood that Shalamov had died. (Footnote of 1972.)

not in the least for show, and there weren't any declamations. Take some Aunt Dusya Chmil, a round-faced, calm, and quite illiterate old woman. The convoy guards called out to her: "Chmil! What is your article?"

And she gently, good-naturedly replied: "Why are you asking, my boy? It's all written down there. I can't remember them all." (She had a bouquet of sections under Article 58.)

"Your term!"

Auntie Dusya sighed. She wasn't giving such contradictory answers in order to annoy the convoy. In her own simplehearted way she pondered this question: Her term? Did they really think it was given to human beings to know their terms?

"What term! . . . Till God forgives my sins—till then I'll be serving time."

"You are a silly, you! A silly!" The convoy guards laughed. "Fifteen years you've got, and you'll serve them all, and maybe some more besides."

But after two and a half years of her term had passed, even though she had sent no petitions—all of a sudden a piece of paper came: release!

How could one not envy those people? Were circumstances more favorable for them? By no means! It is a well-known fact that the "nuns" were kept only with prostitutes and thieves at penalty camps. And yet who was there among the religious believers whose soul was corrupted? They died—most certainly, but . . . they were not corrupted.

And how can one explain that certain unstable people found faith right there in camp, that they were strengthened by it, and that they survived uncorrupted?

And many more, scattered about and unnoticed, came to their allotted turning point and made no mistake in their choice. Those who managed to see that things were not only bad for them, but even worse, even harder, for their neighbors.

And all those who, under the threat of a penalty zone and a new term of imprisonment, refused to become stoolies?

How, in general, can one explain Grigory Ivanovich Grigoryev, a soil scientist? A scientist who volunteered for the People's Volunteer Corps in 1941—and the rest of the story is a familiar one. Taken prisoner near Vyazma, he spent his whole captivity in a German camp. And the subsequent story is also

familiar. When he returned, he was arrested by us and given a tenner. I came to know him in winter, engaged in general work in Ekibastuz. His forthrightness gleamed from his big quiet eyes, some sort of unwavering forthrightness. This man was never able to bow in spirit. And he didn't bow in camp either, even though he worked only two of his ten years in his own field of specialization, and didn't receive food parcels from home for nearly the whole term. He was subjected on all sides to the camp philosophy, to the camp corruption of soul, but he was incapable of adopting it. In the Kemerovo camps (Antibess) the security chief kept trying to recruit him as a stoolie. Grigoryev replied to him quite honestly and candidly: "I find it quite *repulsive* to talk to you. You will find many willing without me." "You bastard, you'll crawl on all fours." "I would be better off hanging myself on the first branch." And so he was sent off to a penalty situation. He stood it for half a year. And he made *mistakes* which were even more unforgivable: When he was sent on an agricultural work party, he refused (as a soil scientist) to accept the post of brigadier offered him. He hoed and scythed with enthusiasm. And even more stupidly: in Ekibastuz at the stone quarry he refused to be a work checker—only because he would have had to pad the work sheets for the sloggers, for which, later on, when they caught up with it, the eternally drunk free foreman would have to pay the penalty. (But would he?) And so he went to break rocks! His honesty was so monstrously unnatural that when he went out to process potatoes with the vegetable storeroom brigade, he did not steal any, though everyone else did. When he was in a good post, in the privileged repair-shop brigade at the pumping-station equipment, he left simply because he refused to wash the socks of the free bachelor construction supervisor, Treivish. (His fellow brigade members tried to persuade him: Come on now, isn't it all the same, the kind of work you do? But no, it turned out it was not at all the same to him!) How many times did he select the worst and hardest lot, just so as not to have to offend against conscience—and he didn't, not in the least, and I am a witness. And even more: because of the astounding influence on his body of his bright and spotless human spirit (though no one today believes in any such influence, no one understands it) the organism of Grigory Ivanovich, who was no longer young (close to fifty), grew stronger in camp; his earlier rheumatism of the

joints disappeared completely, and he became particularly healthy after the typhus from which he recovered: in winter he went out in cotton sacks, making holes in them for his head and his arms—and he did not catch cold!

So wouldn't it be more correct to say that no camp can corrupt those who have a stable nucleus, who do not accept that pitiful ideology which holds that "human beings are created for happiness," an ideology which is done in by the first blow of the work assigner's cudgel?

Those people became corrupted in camp who before camp had not been enriched by any morality at all or by any spiritual upbringing. (This is not at all a theoretical matter—since during our glorious half-century millions of them grew up.)

Those people became corrupted in camp who had already been corrupted out in freedom or who were ready for it. Because people are corrupted in freedom too, sometimes even more effectively than in camp.

The convoy officer who ordered that Moiseyevaite be tied to a post in order to be mocked—had he not been corrupted more profoundly than the camp inmates who spat on her?

And for that matter did every one of the brigade members spit on her? Perhaps only two from each brigade did? In fact, that is probably what happened.

Tatyana Falike writes: "Observation of people convinced me that no man could become a scoundrel in camp if he had not been one before."

If a person went swiftly bad in camp, what it might mean was that he had not just gone bad, but that that inner foulness which had not previously been needed had disclosed itself.

M. A. Voichenko has his opinion: "In camp, existence did not determine consciousness, but just the opposite: consciousness and steadfast faith in the human essence decided whether you became an animal or remained a human being."

A drastic, sweeping declaration! . . . But he was not the only one who thought so. The artist Ivashev-Musatov passionately argued exactly the same thing.

Yes, camp corruption was a mass phenomenon. But not only because the camps were awful, but because in addition we Soviet people stepped upon the soil of the Archipelago spiritually disarmed—long since prepared to be corrupted, already tinged

by it out in freedom, and we strained our ears to hear from the old camp veterans "how to live in camp."

But we ought to have known how to live (and how to die) without any camp.

And perhaps, Varlam Tikhonovich Shalamov, as a general rule friendship between people does arise in need and misfortune, even in extreme misfortune too—but not between such withered and nasty people as we were, given our decades of upbringing?

If corruption was so inevitable, then why did Olga Lvovna Sliozberg not abandon her freezing friend on the forest trail, but stay behind for nearly certain death together with her—and save her? Wasn't that an extreme of misfortune?

And if corruption was so inevitable, then where did Vasily Mefodyevich Yakovenko spring from? He served out two terms, had only just been released, was living as a free employee in Vorkuta, and was just beginning to crawl around without an escort and acquire his first tiny nest. It was 1949. In Vorkuta they began to rearrest former zeks and give them new sentences. An arrest psychosis! There was panic among the free employees! How could they hold on to their freedom? How could they be less noticeable? But Y. D. Grodzensky, a friend of Yakovenko from the same Vorkuta camp, was arrested. During the interrogation he was losing strength and was close to death. There was no one to bring him food parcels. And Yakovenko fearlessly brought him food parcels! If you want to, you dogs, rake me in too!

Why was *this man* not corrupted!

And do not *all* those who survived remember one or another person who reached out a hand to him in camp and saved him at a difficult moment?

Yes, the camps were calculated and intended to corrupt. But this didn't mean that they succeeded in crushing *everyone.*

Just as in nature the process of oxidation never occurs without an accompanying reduction (one substance oxidizes while at the same time another reduces), so in camp, too (and everywhere in life), there is no corruption without ascent. They exist alongside one another.

In the next part I hope still to show how in other camps, in the Special Camps, a different *environment* was created after a

certain time: the process of corruption was greatly hampered and the process of ascent became attractive even to the camp careerists.

■

Well, and what about *correction?* How did things go with correction, after all? ("Correction" is a social and state concept and does not coincide with ascent.) All the systems of justice in the world, not just our own, dream that criminals will not merely serve out their term but will also become corrected in the process, in other words behave so as not to return to the defendant's bench in court, particularly for the same offense.[5]

Dostoyevsky exclaims: "Whom did hard labor ever correct?"

The ideal of correction existed in Russian legislation after the great reform. (The whole of Chekhov's *Sakhalin* grew out of that ideal.) But was it ever successfully implemented?

P. Yakubovich thought about this a great deal and wrote: The terrorist regimen of hard labor "corrects" only those who have not become depraved—but they would not commit a second crime even without it. Yet this regimen only depraves a corrupt person, compelling him to be sly and hypocritical, and to do his utmost not to leave any clues behind.

What can one say about our Corrective Labor Camps? Students of penology (Gefängniskunde) always believed that a prisoner must not be driven to total despair, that he must always be left hope and a way out. The reader has already seen that our Corrective Labor Camps drove prisoners only and precisely to total despair.

Chekhov spoke truly: "Soul-searching—that is what's truly needed for correction." But it was soul-searching that the managers of our camps feared most of all. The common barracks, brigades, work collectives, were all specially designed to disperse and dismember that dangerous soul-searching.

What sort of correction could there be in our camps! All they could do was damage: instill the thieves' morality, instill the

5. Nonetheless, they never strove to "correct" the 58's—in other words to avoid imprisoning them a second time. We have already cited the frank statements of the penologists on this subject. They wanted to exterminate the 58's through labor. And the fact that we survived was due to . . . our own initiative.

cruel camp ways as the general law of life. ("Criminogenic places" in the penologists' language—in other words, crime schools.)

I. G. Pisarev, when he was completing his lengthy prison sentence, wrote, in 1963: "It becomes particularly hard, because you leave here an incurable nervous wreck, with your health irreparably ruined by lack of proper food and by incessant incitement. Here people are corrupted once and for all. Maybe butter wouldn't have melted in a man's mouth before—but now you'd never manage to put salt on his tail. If you say 'pig' to a person for seven years, he will end up by grunting. . . . It is only the first year that punishes the prisoner; all the rest simply embitter him. He adapts to the conditions, and that is all. The law, with its long sentences and its cruelty, punishes the criminal's family more than it does him."

Here is another letter. "It is painful and frightening to leave life without having seen anything and without having done anything, and no one even cares about you except, in all likelihood, your mother, who never ceases to wait for you her whole life long."

And here is what Aleksandr Kuzmich K., who devoted much thought to the matter, wrote in 1963:

> They commuted my sentence of execution to twenty years of hard labor, but, to be quite honest, I don't consider that to have been any favor to me. . . . I experienced those "mistakes," as it is now the style to call them, on my own skin and bones—and they were in no way any easier or better than those of Auschwitz or Majdanek. How is one supposed to distinguish dirt from truth? A murderer from an instructor? The law from lawlessness? An executioner from a patriot —when he moves upward, and from being a lieutenant becomes a lieutenant colonel, and the cockade he wears on his hat is very much like the one worn before 1917? . . . And how am I, emerging after eighteen years of imprisonment, supposed to decipher all the obfuscations? . . . I envy you educated people who have flexible minds and who do not have to spend a long time breaking your heads in order to figure out how you should proceed or how you should adapt, *which in fact I do not want to do.*

Well spoken indeed! "I do not want." With feelings like that on his release, can one say that he was corrupted? But was he then *corrected* in the state's sense? Of course not. For the state

he has simply been ruined. See what he has come to understand: This was no different from Auschwitz, and the cockades are no different either.

The "correction" which the state would like (?) is by and large never attained in the camps. The "graduates" of the camp learn only to be two-faced, how to *pretend* to be corrected, and they learn cynicism—toward the appeals of the state, the laws of the state, and its promises.

And what if there is nothing for a person *to be corrected of?* If he is not a criminal at all in the first place? If he has been imprisoned because he prayed to God, or expressed an independent opinion, or became a prisoner of war, or because of his father, or simply to fulfill the prisoner-arrest quota—what then could the camps give him?

The Sakhalin prison inspector said to Chekhov: "If, in the final analysis, out of a hundred hard-labor prisoners fifteen to twenty emerge as decent men, the responsibility for this result lies not so much with the corrective measures we employ as with our Russian courts, which send so many good reliable elements to hard labor."

Well, that judgment can stand for the Archipelago too, provided we increase the proportion of the innocently sentenced to, say, 80 percent, without at the same time forgetting that in our camps the percentage of spoilage was also considerably higher.

If we are speaking not about the meat grinder for unwanted millions, not about the cesspool into which they were hurled without pity for the people—but about a serious correctional system—the most complex of questions arises: How is it possible to give monotonously uniform punishments on the basis of a single, unified criminal code? After all, externally *equal* punishments for *different* individuals, some more moral and others more corrupted, some more sensitive and some more crude, some educated and some uneducated, are completely *unequal* punishments. (See Dostoyevsky in many different places in his *The House of the Dead.*)

English thought has understood this, and they say there (I don't know how much they practice it) that the punishment must fit not only the crime but also the character of each criminal.

For example, the general loss of external freedom for a person

with a rich inner world is less hard to bear than for a person who is immature, who lives more in terms of the flesh. This second person "requires more in terms of external impressions, and his instincts pull him more strongly in the direction of freedom." (Yakubovich.) The first finds it easier to be in solitary confinement, especially with books. (Ah, how some of us thirsted for that kind of imprisonment, instead of camp! When the body is confined, what broad horizons are opened to the mind and the soul! Nikolai Morozov did not seem in any way remarkable *either* before his arrest *or*, which is the more surprising, after it. But prison meditation provided him with the chance to conceive of the planetary structure of the atom—with its differentially charged nucleus and electrons—ten years before Rutherford! But *we* were never offered pencils, paper, and books, and even had every last one of them taken away from us.) The second kind of prisoner, on the other hand, might not be able to stand solitary confinement for even a year, and would simply wither away and die off. He would need someone, companions! And yet for the former kind of prisoner unpleasant company could be worse than no one. But camp (where they gave very little food) would be much easier for the latter to bear than for the former. As would a barracks where four hundred people were housed, all of them shouting, playing the fool, playing cards and dominoes, howling and snoring, and where, on top of all that, the radio, which was aimed at idiots, was constantly screeching away. (The camps in which I served time were *punished* by having no radio! What a salvation that was!)

Thus the system of Corrective Labor Camps in particular, with their obligatory and exhausting physical labor and their obligatory participation in the humiliating, buzzing ant heap, was a more effective means of destroying the intelligentsia than was prison. It was precisely the intelligentsia that this system killed off quickly and completely.

Chapter 3

■

Our Muzzled Freedom

But even when all the main things about the Gulag Archipelago are written, read, and understood, will there be anyone even then who grasps what our *freedom* was like? What sort of a country it was that for whole decades dragged that Archipelago about inside itself?

It was my fate to carry inside me a tumor the size of a large man's fist. This tumor swelled and distorted my stomach, hindered my eating and sleeping, and I was always conscious of it (though it did not constitute even one-half of one percent of my body, whereas within the country as a whole the Archipelago constituted 8 percent). But the horrifying thing was not that this tumor pressed upon and displaced adjacent organs. What was most terrifying about it was that it exuded poisons and infected the whole body.

And in this same way our whole country was infected by the poisons of the Archipelago. And whether it will ever be able to get rid of them someday, only God knows.

Can we, *dare* we, describe the full loathsomeness of the state in which we lived (not so remote from that of today)? And if we do not show that loathsomeness in its entirety, then we at once have a lie. For this reason I consider that *literature did not exist* in our country in the thirties, forties, and fifties. Because without the *full* truth it is not literature. And today they show this loathsomeness according to the fashion of the moment—by inference, an inserted phrase, an afterthought, or hint—and the result is again a lie.

This is not the task of our book, but let us try to enumerate

briefly those traits of *free* life which were determined by the closeness of the Archipelago or which were in the same style.

1. *Constant Fear.* As the reader has already seen, the roster of the waves of recruitment into the Archipelago is not exhausted with 1935, or 1937, or 1949. The recruitment went on *all the time.* Just as there is no minute when people are not dying or being born, so there was no minute when people were not being arrested. Sometimes this came close to a person, sometimes it was further off; sometimes a person deceived himself into thinking that nothing threatened him, and sometimes he himself became an executioner, and thus the threat to him diminished. But any adult inhabitant of this country, from a collective farmer up to a member of the Politburo, always knew that it would take only one careless word or gesture and he would fly off irrevocably into the abyss.

Just as in the Archipelago beneath every trusty lay the chasm (and death) of general work, so beneath every inhabitant lay the chasm (and death) of the Archipelago. In appearance the country was much bigger than its Archipelago, but all of it and all its inhabitants hung phantomlike above the latter's gaping maw.

Fear was not always the fear of arrest. There were intermediate threats: purges, inspections, the completion of security questionnaires—routine or extraordinary ones—dismissal from work, deprivation of residence permit, expulsion or exile.[1] The security questionnaires were so detailed and so inquisitive that more than half the inhabitants of the country had a bad conscience and were constantly and permanently tormented by the approach of the period when they had to be filled out. Once people had invented a false life story for these questionnaires, they had to try not to get tangled up in it. But danger might strike suddenly: The son of the Kady Vlasov, Igor, regularly entered in his questionnaire the statement that his father was dead. And that way he got into a military school. Then one fine day he was summoned and he had three days to present a certificate of his father's death. And he had to do it!

1. In addition, there were such little-known forms as expulsion from the Party, dismissal from work, and dispatch to a camp as a free worker. That is how Stepan Grigoryevich Onchul was exiled in 1938. It was natural that such persons were listed as being very unreliable. During the war Onchul was conscripted into a work battalion, where he died.

The aggregate fear led to a correct consciousness of one's own insignificance and of the lack of any kind of *rights*. In November, 1938, Natasha Anichkova learned that the person she loved (her common-law husband) had been arrested in Orel. She went there. The enormous square in front of the prison was filled with carts. On them sat women in bast sandals, wearing their traditional peasant dress, with parcels which the authorities refused to accept. Anichkova pushed her way up to a window in a dreadful prison wall. "Who are you?" they asked her sternly. They heard her out. "Well, now, listen here, Comrade Muscovite, I am going to give you one piece of *advice:* get out of here today, because at night *they are going to come for you too.*" The foreigner finds all this quite incomprehensible: Why had the Chekist given her unsolicited advice instead of a businesslike answer to her question? What right did he have to demand of a free citizen that she leave immediately? And who was going *to come* and why? But what Soviet citizen will lie and say that this is incomprehensible to him or that it sounds like an improbable case? After advice like that you would be afraid to stay in a strange city!

Nadezhda Mandelstam* speaks truly when she remarks that our life is so permeated with prison that simple meaningful words like "they took," or "they put inside," or "he is inside," or "they let out," are understood by everyone in our country in only one sense, even without a context.

Peace of mind is something our citizens have never known.

2. *Servitude.* If it had been easy to change your place of residence, to leave a place that had become dangerous for you and thus shake off fear and refresh yourself, people would have behaved more boldly, and they might have taken some risks. But for long decades we were shackled by that same system under which no worker could quit work of his own accord. And the passport regulations also fastened everyone to particular places. And the housing, which could not be sold, nor exchanged, nor rented. And because of this it was an insane piece of daring *to protest* in the place where you lived or worked.

3. *Secrecy and Mistrust.* These feelings replaced our former openhearted cordiality and hospitality (which had still not been

destroyed in the twenties). These feelings were the natural defense of any family and every person, particularly because no one could ever quit work or leave, and every little detail was kept in sight and within earshot for years. The secretiveness of the Soviet person is by no means superfluous, but is absolutely necessary, even though to a foreigner it may at times seem superhuman. The former Tsarist officer K.U. survived and was never arrested only because when he got married he did not tell his *wife* about his past. His brother, N.U., was arrested—and the wife of the arrested man, taking advantage of the fact that they lived in different cities at the time of his arrest, hid his arrest from her own *father and mother*—so they would not blurt it out. She preferred telling them and everyone else that her husband had abandoned her, and then playing that role a long time! Now these were the secrets of one family which I was told thirty years later. And what urban family did not have such secrets?

In 1949 the father of a girl who was a fellow student of V.I.'s was arrested. In these cases everyone would shun such a student, and that was considered natural. But V.I. did not shun her, and openly expressed sympathy with the girl, and tried to find ways to help her out. Frightened by such unusual conduct, the girl rejected V.I.'s help and participation, and lied to him, saying she did not believe in the innocence of her arrested father, and that he had evidently concealed his crime from his family all his life. (And it was only during the times of Khrushchev that their tongues were loosened: the girl told him she had decided he was either a police informer or else a member of an anti-Soviet organization out to rope in the dissatisfied.)

This universal mutual mistrust had the effect of deepening the mass-grave pit of slavery. The moment someone began to speak up frankly, everyone stepped back and shunned him: "A provocation!" And therefore anyone who burst out with a sincere protest was predestined to loneliness and alienation.

4. *Universal Ignorance.* Hiding things from each other, and not trusting each other, we ourselves helped implement that *absolute secrecy*, absolute misinformation, among us which was *the cause of causes* of everything that took place—including both the millions of arrests and the mass approval of them also. Informing one another of nothing, neither shouting nor groaning,

and learning nothing from one another, we were completely in the hands of the newspapers and the official orators. Every day they pushed in our faces some new piece of incitement, like a photograph of a railroad wreck (sabotage) somewhere three thousand miles away. And what we really needed to learn about, which was what had happened on our apartment landing that day, we had no way of finding out.

How could you become a citizen, knowing nothing about life around you? Only when you yourself were caught in the trap would you find out—too late.

5. *Squealing* was developed to a mind-boggling extent. Hundreds of thousands of Security officers in their official offices, in the innocent rooms of official buildings, and in prearranged apartments, sparing neither paper nor their unoccupied time, tirelessly recruited and summoned stool pigeons to give reports, and this in such enormous numbers as they could never have found necessary for collecting information. They even recruited obviously useless and unsuitable people who would most certainly not agree to report to them—for example, a religious believer, the wife of the Baptist minister Nikitin, who had died in camp. Nonetheless, she was kept standing for several hours while being questioned, then was arrested, and then transferred to worse work at her factory. One of the purposes of such extensive recruitment was, evidently, to make each subject feel the breath of the stool pigeons on his own skin. So that in every group of people, in every office, in every apartment, either there would be an informer or else the people there would be afraid there was.

I will give my own superficial speculative estimate: Out of every four to five city dwellers there would most certainly be one who at least once in his life had received a proposal to become an informer. And it might even have been more widespread than that. Quite recently I carried out my own spot check, both among groups of ex-prisoners and among groups of those who have always been free. I asked which out of the group they had tried to recruit and when and how. And it turned out that out of several people at a table *all* had received such proposals at one time or another!

Nadezhda Mandelstam correctly concludes: Beyond the purpose of weakening ties between people, there was another purpose as well. Any person who had let himself be recruited would,

out of fear of public exposure, be very much interested in the continuing stability of the regime.

Secretiveness spread its cold tentacles throughout the whole people. It crept between colleagues at work, between old friends, students, soldiers, neighbors, children growing up—and even into the reception room of the NKVD, among the prisoners' wives bringing food parcels.

6. *Betrayal as a Form of Existence.* Given this constant fear over a period of many years—for oneself and one's family—a human being became a vassal of fear, subjected to it. And it turned out that the least dangerous form of existence was constant betrayal.

The mildest and at the same time most widespread form of betrayal was not to do anything bad directly, but just not to notice the doomed person next to one, not to help him, to turn away one's face, to shrink back. They had arrested a neighbor, your comrade at work, or even your close friend. You kept silence. You acted as if you had not noticed. (For you could not afford to lose your current job!) And then it was announced at work, at the general meeting, that the person who had disappeared the day before was . . . an inveterate enemy of the people. And you, who had bent your back beside him for twenty years at the same desk, now by your noble silence (or even by your condemning speech!), had to show how hostile you were to his crimes. (You had to make this sacrifice for the sake of your own dear family, for your own dear ones! What right had you not to think *about them?*) But the person arrested had left behind him a wife, a mother, children, and perhaps they at least ought to be helped? No, no, that would be dangerous: after all, these were the wife of an *enemy* and the mother of an enemy, and they were the children of an enemy (and your own children had a long education ahead of them)!

When they arrested engineer Palchinsky, his wife, Nina, wrote to Kropotkin's widow: "I have been left without any funds, and no one has given me any help, all shun me and fear me. . . . And I have found out what friends are now. There are very few exceptions."[2]

And one who concealed an enemy was also an enemy! And

2. A letter of August 16, 1929, manuscript section of the Lenin Library, collection 410, card file 5, storage unit 24.

one who abetted an enemy was also an enemy! And one who continued his friendship with an enemy was also an enemy. And the telephone of the accursed family fell silent. And they stopped getting letters. And on the street people passed them without recognizing them, without offering them a hand to shake, without nodding to them. And even less were they invited out. And no one offered to lend them money. And in the hustle of a big city people felt as if they were in a desert.

And that was precisely what Stalin needed! And he laughed in his mustaches, the shoeshine boy!

Academician Sergei Vavilov, after the repression of his great brother, became a lackey president of the Academy of Sciences. (That mustached prankster thought it all up too, to make a fool of him, and as a test for the human heart.) A. N. Tolstoi, a Soviet count, avoided not only visiting but even giving money to the family of his arrested brother. Leonid Leonov forbade his own wife, whose maiden name was Sabashnikova, to visit the family of her arrested brother, S. M. Sabashnikov.

And the legendary Georgi Dimitrov, that roaring lion of the Leipzig trial, retreated and declined to save and even betrayed his friends Popov and Tanev when they, who had been acquitted by a Fascist court, got sentenced to fifteen years each on Soviet soil "for the attempted assassination of Comrade Dimitrov." (And they served time in Kraslag.)

It is well known what the situation of an arrested man's family was like. V. Y. Kaveshan from Kaluga recalls it: "After the arrest of our father everyone avoided and shunned us, as if we were lepers, and I had to leave school because the *children tormented me*. [More betrayers were growing up! More executioners growing up!] And my mother was fired from her work. And we had to resort to begging."

One family of a Muscovite arrested in 1937—a mother and little children—was being taken to the railroad station by the police to be sent into exile. And all of a sudden, when they went through the station, the small boy, aged eight, disappeared. The policemen wore themselves out looking for him but couldn't find him. So they exiled the family without the boy. And what had happened was that he dived under the red cloth wound around the high pedestal beneath the bust of Stalin, and he sat there until the danger passed. And then he returned home—

where the apartment was sealed shut. He went to the neighbors, and to acquaintances, and to friends of his papa and mama—and not only did no one take that small boy into their family, but they refused even to let him spend the night! And so he went and turned himself in at an orphanage. . . . Contemporaries! Fellow citizens! Do you recognize here your own swinish faces?

But all that was only the minimal degree of betrayal—to turn one's back. But how many other alluring degrees there were—and what a multitude of people descended them! Those who fired Kaveshan's mother from work—did they not also turn their backs and make their own contribution? Those who harkened to the ring of the Security men and sent Nikitin's wife to manual labor, so that she would give in and become a stoolie all the sooner? Yes, and those editors who rushed to cross off the name of the writer who had been arrested the day before.

Marshal Blücher—he is a symbol of that epoch: he sat like an owl in the presidium of the court and judged Tukhachevsky. (And Tukhachevsky would have done the same to him.) They shot Tukhachevsky—and then they cut off Blücher's head too. Or what about the famous medical professors Vinogradov and Shereshevsky? Today we recall that they themselves were victims of the malevolent slander of 1952—but they themselves signed the no less malevolent slander against their colleagues Pletnev and Levin in 1936. (And the Great Laureate kept himself in training, both in theme and in individual souls. . . .)

People lived in the *field* of betrayal—and their best powers of reasoning were used in justification of it. In 1937 a husband and wife were awaiting arrest—because the wife had come from Poland. And here is what they agreed on: Before the actual arrest the husband denounced the wife to the police! She was arrested, and by the same token he was "purified" in the eyes of the NKVD and stayed free. And in that same glorious year, the prerevolutionary political prisoner Adolf Mezhov, going off to prison, proclaimed to his one and only beloved daughter, Izabella: "We have devoted our lives to Soviet power, and therefore let no one make use of your injury. Enter the Komsomol!" Under the terms of his sentence, Mezhov was not forbidden correspondence, but the Komsomol forbade his daughter to engage in any correspondence. And in the spirit of her father's testament the daughter renounced her father.

How many of those *renunciations* there were at that time! Some of them made in public, some of them in the press: "I, the undersigned, from such and such a date renounce my father and my mother as enemies of the Soviet people." And thus they purchased their lives.

Those who were not alive during that time, or who do not live today in China, will find it nearly impossible to comprehend and forgive this. In ordinary human societies the human being lives out his sixty years without ever getting caught in the pincers of that kind of choice, and he himself is quite convinced of his decency, as are those who pronounce speeches over his grave. A human being departs from life without ever having learned into what kind of deep well of evil one can fall.

And the mass mange of souls does not spread through society instantly. During all the twenties and the beginning of the thirties many in our country still preserved their souls and the concepts of the former society: to help in misfortune, to defend those in difficulties. And even as late as 1933 Nikolai Vavilov and Meister openly petitioned on behalf of all the arrested staff members of the All-Union Scientific Research Institute of Plant Breeding. There is a certain minimal necessary period of corruption prior to which the great Apparatus cannot cope with the people: This period is also determined by the age of those stubborn people who have not yet grown old. For Russia it took twenty years. When the Baltic States suffered mass arrests in 1949, their corruption had only had five or six years to establish itself, and that proved too little, and families that suffered from the government met with support on all sides. (Yes, and there was a supplementary cause there, strengthening the resistance of the Baltic peoples: social oppression there appeared simply as national oppression, and in this case people always fight back more firmly.)

In evaluating 1937 for the Archipelago, we refused it the title of the crowning glory. But here, in talking about *freedom*, we have to grant it this corroded crown of betrayal; one has to admit that this was the particular year that broke the soul of our *freedom* and opened it wide to corruption on a mass scale.

Yet even this was not yet the end of our society! (As we see today, the end never did come—the living thread of Russia survived, hung on until better times came in 1956, and it is now

less than ever likely to die.) The resistance was not overt. It did not beautify the epoch of the universal fall, but with its invisible warm veins its heart kept on beating, beating, beating, beating.

And in that awful time, when in apprehensive loneliness precious photographs, precious letters and diaries, were burned, when every yellowed piece of paper in the family cupboard all of a sudden gleamed out like a fiery fern of death and could not jump into the stove fast enough, in that awful time, what great heroism was required *not* to burn things up night after night for thousands and thousands of nights and to preserve the archives of those who had been sentenced (like Florensky) or of those who were well known to be in disgrace (like the philosopher Fyodorov)! And what a blazing, underground, anti-Soviet act of rebellion the story of Lidiya Chukovskaya, *Sofya Petrovna*,* must have seemed! It was preserved by Isidor Glikin. In blockaded Leningrad, feeling the approach of death, he made his way through the entire city to carry it to his sister and thus to save it.

Every act of resistance to the government required heroism quite out of proportion to the magnitude of the act. It was safer to keep dynamite during the rule of Alexander II than it was to shelter the orphan of an enemy of the people under Stalin. Nonetheless, how many such children were taken in and saved . . . Let the children themselves tell their stories. And secret assistance to families . . . did occur. And there was someone who took the place of an arrested person's wife who had been in a hopeless line for three days, so that she could go in to get warm and get some sleep. And there was also someone who went off with pounding heart to warn someone else that an ambush was waiting for him at his apartment and that he must not return there. And there was someone who gave a fugitive shelter, even though he himself did not sleep that night.

We have already mentioned those so bold as not to vote in favor of the Promparty executions. And there was also someone who went to the Archipelago for defending his unobtrusive, unknown colleagues at work. And sons followed in the footsteps of their fathers: the son of that Rozhansky,* Ivan, himself suffered in defense of his colleague Kopelev. At a Party meeting of the Leningrad Children's Publishing House, M. M. Maisner stood up and began to defend "wreckers in children's literature" —and right then and there he was expelled from the Party and

arrested. And, after all, he knew what he was doing.[3] And in the wartime censorship office—in Ryazan in 1941—a girl censor tore up the criminal letter of a front-line soldier whom she did not know. But she was observed tearing it up and putting it into a wastebasket, and they pieced the letter back together—and *arrested* her. She sacrificed herself for a distant stranger! (And the only reason I heard about this was that it took place in Ryazan. And how many such cases were there unknown? . . .)

Nowadays it is quite convenient to declare that *arrest* was a lottery (Ehrenburg). Yes, it was a lottery all right, but some of the numbers were "fixed." They threw out a general dragnet and arrested in accordance with assigned quota figures, yes, but every person who *objected publicly* they grabbed that very minute! And it turned into a *selection on the basis of soul*, not a lottery! Those who were bold fell beneath the ax, were sent off to the Archipelago—and the picture of the monotonously obedient *freedom* remained unruffled. All those who were purer and better could not stay in that society; and without them it kept getting more and more trashy. You would not notice these quiet departures at all. But they were, in fact, the dying of the soul of the people.

7. *Corruption.* In a situation of fear and betrayal over many years people survive unharmed only in a superficial, bodily sense. And inside . . . they become corrupt.

So many millions of people agreed to become stool pigeons. And, after all, if some forty to fifty million people served long sentences in the Archipelago during the course of the thirty-five years up to 1953, including those who died—and this is a modest estimate, being only three or four times the population of Gulag at any one time, and, after all, during the war the death rate there was running *one percent per day*—then we can assume that at least every third or at least every fifth case was the consequence of somebody's denunciation and that somebody was willing to provide evidence as a witness! All of them, all those

3. There is evidence in our possession of a heroic case of mass steadfastness, but I require a second independent confirmation of it: in 1930 several hundred cadets of a certain Ukrainian military school arrived on Solovki in their own formation (refusing convoy)—because they had refused to suppress peasant disturbances.

murderers with ink, are still among us today. Some of them brought about the arrest of their neighbors out of fear—and this was only the first step. Others did it for material gain. And still others, the youngest at the time, who are now on the threshold of a pension, betrayed with inspiration, out of ideological considerations, and sometimes even openly; after all, it was considered a service to one's class to expose the enemy! And all these people are among us. And most often they are prospering. And we still rejoice that they are "our ordinary Soviet people."

Cancer of the soul develops secretly too and strikes at that particular part of it where one expects to find gratitude. Fyodor Peregud gave Misha Ivanov food and drink; Ivanov was out of work, and so Peregud got him a job at the Tambov railroad-car repair factory and taught him the trade. He had no place to live, so he let him move in with him, like a relative. And then Mikhail Dmitriyevich Ivanov sent a denunciation to the NKVD accusing Fyodor Peregud of praising German equipment at dinner at home. (You have to know Fyodor Peregud. He was a mechanic, a motor mechanic, a radio operator and repairman, an electrician, a watchmaker, an optician, a foundryman, a modelmaker, a cabinetmaker, master of up to twenty different skills. In camp he opened up a shop for precision mechanics. When he lost his leg, he made himself an artificial limb.) And so the police came to take Peregud and took his fourteen-year-old daughter to prison too. And M. D. Ivanov was responsible for all that! He came to the trial looking black. And what that meant was that a rotting soul sometimes emerges in the face. But soon after, he left the factory and began to work for State Security in the open. And subsequently, because of his lack of ability, he was made a fireman.

In a corrupt society ingratitude was an everyday, run-of-the-mill emotion, and there was almost nothing surprising in it. After the arrest of the plant breeder V. S. Markin, the agronomist A. A. Solovyov quite safely stole the variety of wheat which Markin had developed, "Taiga 49."[4] When the Institute of Buddhist Culture was destroyed (all its leading personnel were arrested) and its head, Academician Shcherbatsky, died, his

4. And when Markin was rehabilitated twenty years later, Solovyov was unwilling to yield him even *half* the payment he had received for it. *Izvestiya*, November 15, 1963.

student Kalyanov came to his widow and persuaded her to give him the books and papers of the deceased: "Otherwise things will go badly, because the Institute of Buddhist Culture turned out to be a spy center." Having taken possession of these works, he published part of them (as well as the work of Vostrikov) under his own name and thus acquired a reputation.

There are many scientific reputations in Moscow and in Leningrad that were also built on blood and bones. *The ingratitude of students*, cutting in a skewbald swath through our science and technology of the thirties and forties, had a quite understandable explanation: science passed out of the hands of the real scientists and engineers into the hands of the callow greedy *climbers.*

By now it is quite impossible to trace and enumerate all these appropriated works and stolen inventions. And what about the apartments taken over from those arrested? And what about their stolen possessions? And during the war did not this savage trait manifest itself as nearly universal: if there was someone bereaved, bombed out, their home burned down or being evacuated, the neighbors who had survived the disaster, plain Soviet people, tried in those very moments to profit from those who were stricken.

The aspects of corruption are varied, and it is not for us to cover them all in this chapter. The overall life of society came down to the fact that traitors were advanced and mediocrities triumphed, while everything that was best and most honest was trampled underfoot. Who can show me *one case* in the whole country from the thirties to the fifties of a noble person casting down, destroying, driving out a base troublemaker? I affirm that such a case would have been impossible, just as it is impossible for any waterfall to fall upward as an exception. After all, no noble person would turn to State Security, but for any villain it was always right there at hand. And State Security would not stop at anything, once it didn't stop at what it did to Nikolai Vavilov. So why should the waterfall fall upward?

This easy triumph of mean people over the noble boiled in a black stinking cloud in the crowded capital. But it stank, too, even way up north, beneath the honest Arctic storms, at the polar stations so beloved in the legends of the thirties, where the clear-eyed giants of Jack London should have been smoking

pipes of peace. At the Arctic station on Domashni Island, off Severnaya Zemlya, there were just three people: the non-Party chief of the station, Aleksandr Pavlovich Babich, a much-honored old Arctic explorer; the manual laborer Yeryomin, who was the only Party member and who was also the Party organizer (!) of the station; and the Komsomol member (the Komsomol organizer!), the meteorologist Goryachenko, who was ambitiously trying to shove the chief aside and take his job. Goryachenko dug around among the chief's personal possessions, stole documents, and made threats. The Jack London solution would have been for the other two men simply to shove this scoundrel down through the ice. But no! Instead, a telegram was sent to Papanin in the Northern Sea Route headquarters about the necessity of replacing this employee. The Party organizer Yeryomin signed the telegram, but then he confessed to the Komsomol member, and together they sent Papanin a Party-Komsomol telegram just the opposite in content. Papanin's decision was: The collective has disintegrated; remove them to the mainland. They sent the icebreaker *Sadko* to get them. On board the *Sadko* the Komsomol man lost no time at all and provided the ship's political commissar with *materials*. Babich was arrested on the spot. (The principal accusation was that he intended to turn the icebreaker *Sadko* over to the Germans—that same icebreaker on which they were all now sailing! . . .) Once ashore, Babich was immediately put into a Preliminary Detention Cell. (Let us imagine for one moment that the ship's commissar was an honest and reasonable person and that he had summoned Babich and heard the other side of the question. But this would have meant disclosing a secret denunciation to a possible enemy! And in that case Goryachenko, through Papanin, would have also procured the arrest of the ship's commissar. The system worked faultlessly!)

Of course, among individuals who had not been brought up from childhood in the Pioneer detachments and the Komsomol cells, there were souls that retained their integrity. At a Siberian station a husky soldier, seeing a trainload of prisoners, suddenly rushed off to buy several packs of cigarettes and persuaded the convoy guards to pass them on to the prisoners. (And in other places in this book we describe similar cases.) But this soldier was probably not on duty, and was probably on leave, and he

did not have the Komsomol organizer of his unit near him. If he had been on duty in his own unit, he would not have made up his mind to do it because he would have caught hell for it. Yes, and it was possible that even in the other situation the military police may have called him to account for it.

8. *The Lie as a Form of Existence.* Whether giving in to fear, or influenced by material self-interest or envy, people can't nonetheless become stupid so swiftly. Their souls may be thoroughly muddied, but they still have a sufficiently clear mind. They cannot believe that all the genius of the world has suddenly concentrated itself in one head with a flattened, low-hanging forehead. They simply cannot believe the stupid and silly images of themselves which they hear over the radio, see in films, and read in the newspapers. Nothing forces them to speak the truth in reply, but no one allows them to keep silent! They have to *talk!* And what else but a lie? They have to applaud madly, and no one requires honesty of them.

And if in *Pravda* on May 20, 1938, we read the appeal of workers in higher education to Comrade Stalin:

> Heightening our revolutionary vigilance, we will help our glorious intelligence service, headed by the true Leninist, the Stalinist People's Commissar Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov, to purge our higher educational institutions as well as all our country of the remnants of the Trotskyite-Bukharinite and other counterrevolutionary trash . . .

we certainly do not conclude that the entire meeting of a thousand persons consisted solely of idiots—but merely of degenerate liars acceding to their own arrest on the morrow.

The permanent lie becomes the only safe form of existence, in the same way as betrayal. Every wag of the tongue can be overheard by someone, every facial expression observed by someone. Therefore every word, if it does not have to be a direct lie, is nonetheless obliged not to contradict the general, common lie. There exists a collection of ready-made phrases, of labels, a selection of ready-made lies. And not one single speech nor one single essay or article nor one single book—be it scientific, journalistic, critical, or "literary," so-called—can exist without the use of these primary clichés. In the most scientific of texts it is required that someone's false authority or false priority be

upheld somewhere, and that someone be cursed for telling the truth; without this lie even an academic work cannot see the light of day. And what can be said about those shrill meetings and trashy lunch-break gatherings where you are compelled to vote against your own opinion, to pretend to be glad over what distresses you (be it a new state loan, the lowering of piece rates, contributions to some tank column, Sunday work duties, or sending your children to help on the collective farms) and to express the deepest anger in areas about which you couldn't care less—some kind of intangible, invisible violence in the West Indies or Paraguay?

In prison Tenno recalled with shame how two weeks before his own arrest he had lectured the sailors on "The Stalinist Constitution—The Most Democratic in the World." And of course not one word of it was sincere.

There is no man who has typed even one page . ... without lying. There is no man who has spoken from a rostrum . . . without lying. There is no man who has spoken into a microphone . . . without lying.

But if only it had all ended there! After all, it went further than that: every conversation with the management, every conversation in the Personnel Section, every conversation of any kind with any other Soviet person called for lies—sometimes head on, sometimes looking over your shoulder, sometimes indulgently affirmative. And if your idiot interlocutor said to you face to face that we were retreating to the Volga in order to decoy Hitler farther, or that the Colorado beetles had been dropped on us by the Americans—it was necessary to agree! It was obligatory to agree! (And a shake of the head instead of a nod might well cost you resettlement in the Archipelago. Remember the arrest of Chulpenyov, in Part I, Chapter 7.)

But that was not all: Your children were growing up! If they weren't yet old enough, you and your wife had to avoid saying openly in front of them what you really thought; after all, they were being brought up to be Pavlik Morozovs, to betray their own parents, and they wouldn't hesitate to repeat his achievement. And if the children were still little, then you had to decide what was the best way to bring them up; whether to start them off on lies instead of the truth (so that it would be *easier* for them to live) and then to lie forevermore in front of them too, or to tell

them the truth, with the risk that they might make a slip, that they might let it out, which meant that you had to instill into them from the start that the truth was murderous, that beyond the threshold of the house you had to lie, only lie, just like papa and mama.

The choice was really such that you would rather not have any children.

The lie as the continuing basis of life: A young, intelligent woman, A.K., who understood everything, came from the capital to teach literature in a higher-education institute in the provinces. Her security questionnaire had no black marks on it, and she had a brand-new candidate's degree. In her principal course she saw she had only one Party member and decided that this girl was the one who was bound to be the stool pigeon. (There had to be a *stool pigeon* in every course—of that A.K. was convinced.) And so she decided to become all buddy-buddy with this Party member and pretend friendship with her. (Incidentally, according to the tactics of the Archipelago this was a complete miscalculation. What she should have done, on the contrary, was to paste a couple of failing grades on her at the start and then any denunciations would have looked like sour grapes.) And so these two used to meet outside the institute and exchanged photographs. (The girl student carried A.K.'s photograph around in her Party card case.) During holiday time they corresponded tenderly. And in every lecture A.K. tried to play up to the possible evaluations of her Party student. Four years of this humiliating pretense went by, the student completed her course, and by this time her conduct was a matter of indifference to A.K., so when she made her first return visit to the school, A.K. received her with deliberate coldness. The offended student demanded her photograph and letters back and exclaimed (the most dolefully amusing thing about it was that she probably wasn't a stool pigeon): "If I finish my degree, I will never cling to this pitiful institute the way you do! And what lectures you gave—as dull as dishwater!"

Yes, by impoverishing everything, bleaching it out, and clipping it to suit the perceptions of a stool pigeon, A.K. ruined her lectures, when she was capable of delivering them brilliantly.

As a certain poet said: It wasn't a cult of personality we had, but a cult of hypocrisy.

Here, too, of course, one has to distinguish between degrees:

between the forced, defensive lie and the oblivious, passionate lie of the sort our writers distinguished themselves at most of all, the sort of lie in the midst of whose tender emotion Marietta Shaginyan could write in 1937 (!) that the epoch of socialism had transformed even criminal interrogation: the stories of interrogators showed that nowadays the persons being interrogated *willingly cooperated with them*, telling everything that was required about themselves and others.

And the lie has, in fact, led us so far away from a normal society that you cannot even orient yourself any longer; in its dense, gray fog not even one pillar can be seen. All of a sudden, thanks to footnotes, you figure out that Yakubovich's book *In the World of the Outcasts* was published, although under a pseudonym, *at the very same time* the author was completing his Tsarist hard-labor sentence and being sent off into exile.[5] Well, now, just add that up, just add that up and compare it with us! Compare that with the way my belated and shy novella managed to get out in the open by a miracle, and then they firmly lowered the barriers, bolted things up tightly, and locked the locks. And now it is forbidden to write not merely about something taking place in the present but even about things that took place thirty and fifty years ago. And will we ever read about them during our lifetime? We are destined to go to our graves still immersed in lies and falsehoods.

Moreover, even if they offered us the chance to learn the truth, would our *free people* even want to know it? Y. G. Oksman returned from the camps in 1948, and was not rearrested, but lived in Moscow. His friends and acquaintances did not abandon him, but helped him. But they did not want to hear his recollections of camp! Because if they knew about *that*—how could they go on living?

After the war a certain song became very popular: "The Noise of the City Cannot Be Heard." No singer, even the most mediocre, could perform it without receiving enthusiastic applause. The Chief Administration of Thoughts and Feelings did not at first grasp what was going on, and they allowed it to be performed on the radio and on the stage. After all, it was Russian and had a folk motif. And then suddenly they discovered what it was all

5. At the very time when that hard labor actually existed! It was about convict hard labor which was *contemporary with it*, and not allegedly in the irrevocable past.

about—and they immediately crossed it off the permitted list. The words of the song were about a doomed prisoner, about lovers torn apart. The need to repent existed still and it stirred, and people who were steeped in lies could at least applaud that old song with all their hearts.

9. *Cruelty.* And where among all the preceding qualities was there any place left for kindheartedness? How could one possibly preserve one's kindness while pushing away the hands of those who were drowning? Once you have been steeped in blood, you can only become more cruel. And, anyway, cruelty ("class cruelty") was praised and instilled, and you would soon lose track, probably, of just where between bad and good that trait lay. And when you add that kindness was ridiculed, that pity was ridiculed, that mercy was ridiculed—you'd never be able to chain all those who were drunk on blood!

My nameless woman correspondent, from Arbat No. 15, asks me "about the roots of the cruelty" characteristic of "certain Soviet people." Why is it that the cruelty they manifest is proportionate to the defenselessness of the person in their power? And she cites an example—which is not at all what one might regard as the main one, but which I am going to cite here anyway.

This took place in the winter of 1943–1944 at the Chelyabinsk railroad station, under a canopy near the baggage checkroom. It was minus 13 degrees. Beneath the shed roof was a cement floor, on which was trampled sticky snow from outside. Inside the window of the baggage checkroom stood a woman in a padded jacket, and on the nearer side was a well-fed policeman in a tanned sheepskin coat. They were absorbed in a kittenish, flirtatious conversation. Several men lay on the floor in earth-colored cotton duds and rags. Even to call them threadbare would be rank flattery. These were young fellows—emaciated, swollen, with sores on their lips. One of them, evidently in a fever, lay with bare chest on the snow, groaning. The woman telling the story approached him to ask who they were, and it turned out that one of them had served out his term in camp, another had been released for illness, but that their documents had been made out incorrectly when they were released, and as a result they could not get tickets to go home on the train. And they had no strength left to return to camp either—they were totally fagged out with diarrhea. So then the woman telling the story began to

break off pieces of bread for them. And at this point the policeman broke off his jolly conversation and said to her threateningly: "What's going on, auntie, have you recognized your relatives? You better get out of here. They will die without your help!" And so she thought to herself: After all, they'll up and haul me in just like that and put me in prison! (And that was quite right, what was to stop them?) And . . . she went away.

How typical all this is of our society—what she thought to herself, and how she went away, and that pitiless policeman, and that pitiless woman in the padded jacket, and that cashier at the ticket window who refused them tickets, and that nurse who refused to take them into the city hospital, and that idiotic free employee at the camp who had made out their documents.

It was a fierce and a vicious life, and by this time, you would not, as in Dostoyevsky and Chekhov, call a prisoner "an unfortunate," but, if you please, only "rot." In 1938 Magadan school pupils threw stones at a column of women prisoners (as Surovtseva recalls).

Had our country ever known before, or does any other country know today, so many repulsive and divisive apartment and family quarrels? Every reader will be able to speak of many, and we will mention just one or two.

In a communal apartment on Dolomanovskaya Street in Rostov lived Vera Krasutskaya, whose husband was arrested and perished in 1938. Her neighbor, Anna Stolberg, knew about this, and for eighteen years—from 1938 to 1956—reveled in her power and tormented Krasutskaya with threats; catching her in the kitchen or in the corridor, she would hiss at Krasutskaya: "If I say so, you can go on living, but I only have to say the word and the *Black Maria* will come for you." And it was only in 1956 that Krasutskaya decided to write a complaint to the prosecutor. And Stolberg then shut up. But they continued to live together in the same apartment.

After the arrest of Nikolai Yakovlevich Semyonov in 1950 in the city of Lyubim, his wife, that very winter, kicked out his mother, Mariya Ilinichna Semyonova, who had been living with them: "Get out of here, you old witch! Your son is an enemy of the people!" (Six years later, when her husband returned from camp, she and her grown-up daughter, Nadya, drove him out into the street at night in his underpants. Nadya was so eager to do this because she needed the space for *her own* husband. And

when she threw his trousers in her father's face, she shouted at him: "Get out of here, you old rat!")[6] When Semyonov's mother was kicked out of that apartment, she went to her childless daughter Anna in Yaroslavl. Soon the mother got on her daughter's and her son-in-law's nerves. And her son-in-law, Vasily Fyodorovich Metyolkin, a fireman, on his off-duty days, used to take his mother-in-law's face in the palms of his hands, hold it tight so she couldn't turn away from him, and amuse himself by spitting in her face till he had no spit left, trying to hit her in the eyes and mouth. And when he was really angry, he would take out his penis and shove it in the old woman's face: "Take it, suck it, and die!" His wife explained his conduct to her brother when he returned: "Well, what can I do when Vasya is drunk? . . . What can you expect from a drunk?" And then, in order to get a new apartment ("We need a bathroom because there is no place to wash our old mother and we certainly can't drive her out to a public bath"), they began to treat her tolerably well. And when—"because of her"—they had got a new apartment, they packed the rooms with chests of drawers and sideboards, and pushed her into a cranny between the wardrobe and the wall fourteen inches wide—and told her to lie there and not stick her head out. And N. Y. Semyonov himself, who was by then living with his son, took the risk, without asking his son, of bringing his mother home. The grandson came home. The grandmother sank down on her knees before him: "Vovochka, you're not going to kick me out?" And the grandson grimaced: "Oh, all right, live here until I get married." And it is quite apropos to add in regard to that same granddaughter Nadya—Nadezhda Nikolayevna Topnikova—that around this time she completed the course in the historical and philological faculty of the Yaroslavl Pedagogical Institute, entered the Party, and became an editor of the district newspaper in the city of Neya in Kostroma Province. She was a poetess as well, and in 1961, while she was still in Lyubim, she rationalized her conduct in verse:

> If you're going to fight, then really fight!
> Your father!? Give it to him in the neck!

6. V. I. Zhukov recounts an exactly similar story from Kovrov: his wife drove him out ("Get out, or I will have you jailed again!"), as did his stepdaughter ("Get out, jailbird!").

Morals!! People dreamed them up!
I don't want to hear of them!
In my life I'll march ahead
Solely with cold calculation!

But her Party organization began to demand that she "normalize" her relationship with her father, and she suddenly began to write to him. Overjoyed, the father replied with an all-forgiving letter, which she immediately ran to show her Party organization. And when they saw it, they put a check mark opposite her name, and that was that. And since then all he gets from her are greetings on the great May and November holidays.

Seven people were involved in this tragedy. And so there you have one little droplet of our *freedom.*

In better-brought-up families, they do not chase a relative who has suffered unjustly out onto the street in his underwear, but they are ashamed of him, and they feel burdened and imposed upon by his bitterly "distorted" world outlook.

And one could go on enumerating further. One could name in addition:

10. *Slave Psychology.* That same unfortunate Babich in his declaration to the prosecutor: "I understand that wartime placed more serious obligations and duties on the organs of government than to sort out the charges against individual persons."

And much else.

But let us admit: if under Stalin this whole scheme of things did not just come into being *on its own*—and if, instead, he himself worked it all out for us point by point—he really was a genius!

■

So there in that stinking damp world in which only executioners and the most blatant of betrayers flourished, where those who remained honest became drunkards, since they had no strength of will for anything else, in which the bodies of young people were bronzed by the sun while their souls putrefied inside, in which every night the gray-green hand reached out and collared someone in order to pop him into a box—in that world millions

of women wandered about lost and blinded, whose husbands, sons, or fathers had been torn from them and dispatched to the Archipelago. They were the most scared of all. They feared shiny nameplates, office doors, telephone rings, knocks on the door, the postman, the milkwoman, and the plumber. And everyone in whose path they stood drove them from their apartments, from their work, and from the city.

Sometimes they trustingly based their hopes on the belief that a sentence "without the right of correspondence" was to be understood as meaning just that, and that when ten years had passed, *he* would write.[7] They stood in line outside prisons. They went distances of fifty miles and more to places where, they had heard, food parcels were accepted for mailing. Sometimes they themselves died before the death of their relative in prison. Sometimes they learned the date of death only from the notation on a food parcel that had been returned, which read: "Addressee died in hospital." Sometimes, as in the case of Olga Chavchavadze, who got to Siberia, carrying to her husband's grave a handful of the soil of his native land, they arrived on such a mission only to find that no one could tell them which mound he lay under together with three other corpses. Sometimes, as in the case of Zelma Zhugur, they kept on writing letters to be delivered by hand to some Voroshilov or other, forgetting that Voroshilov's conscience had died long before he died himself.[8]

And these women had children who grew up, and for each one there came a time of extreme need when they absolutely had to have their father back, before it was too late, but he never came.

A little folded triangle of school notebook paper with crooked handwriting. Red and blue pencils in turn, one after the other—in all probability a childish hand had put aside one pencil, rested, and then taken up a new one. Angular, inexperienced, tortuously written letters with breathing spaces between them and sometimes even within words:

Hello Papa I forgot how to write soon in School I will go through the first winter come quickly because it's bad we have no Papa mama

7. Sometimes there really were camps without the right of correspondence; not only the atomic factories of the period from 1945 to 1949, but also, for example, Camp 29 of Karlag allowed no correspondence at all for a year and a half.

8. He did not even have the courage to shield his closest adjutant, Langovoi, from arrest and torture.

says you are away on work or sick and what are you waiting for run away from that hospital here Olyeshka ran away from hospital just in his shirt mama will sew you new pants and I will give you my belt all the same the boys are all afraid of me, and Olyeshenka is the only one I never beat up he also tells the truth he is also poor and I once lay in fever and wanted to die along with mother and she did not want to and I did not want to, oh, my hand is numb from write thats enough I kiss you lots of times

Igoryok 6 and one half years

I already know how to write on envelopes and before mother comes from work I will drop the letter in the mailbox.

Manolis Glezos, "in a clear and passionate speech," told Moscow writers about his comrades languishing in the prisons of Greece.

"I understand that I have made your hearts tremble by my passionate speech. But I did it intentionally. I would like to have your hearts ache for those languishing in imprisonment. . . . Raise your voice for the liberation of the Greek Patriots."[9]

And those well-worn foxes—of course, they raised their voices! After all, a couple of dozen prisoners were languishing in Greece! And maybe Manolis himself did not understand the shamelessness of his appeal, and maybe, too, in Greece they do not have the proverb: "Why grieve for others when there is sobbing at home?"

In various parts of our country we find a certain piece of sculpture: a plaster guard with a police dog which is straining forward in order to sink its teeth into someone. In Tashkent there is one right in front of the NKVD school, and in Ryazan it is like a symbol of the city, the one and only monument to be seen if you approach from the direction of Mikhailov.

And we do not even shudder in revulsion. We have become accustomed to these figures setting dogs onto people as if they were the most natural things in the world.

Setting the dogs onto us.

9. *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, August 27, 1963.

Chapter 4

■

Several Individual Stories

I have fragmented the fates of all the prisoners I have previously mentioned in this book, subordinating their stories to the plan of the book—to the contours of the Archipelago. I have steered away from biographical accounts; it would have been too monotonous, it's how they write and write, shifting all the burden of inquiry off the author's shoulders onto the reader's.

But precisely because of this I consider that at this point I have the right to cite several prisoners' stories in their entirety.

1. Anna Petrovna Skripnikova

The only daughter of an ordinary worker of Maikop, Anna Skripnikova was born in 1896. As we already know from the history of the Party, under the cursed Tsarist regime all paths to an education were closed to her, and she was condemned to the half-starving life of a female slave. And all this really did happen to her—but after the Revolution. At the time she was accepted in the Maikop gymnasium.

Anna grew up to become a big girl who also had a large head. A girl who was her gymnasium friend made a drawing of her which consisted solely of circles: her head was round (from all angles), she had a round forehead and round eyes which somehow expressed eternal perplexity. The lobes of her ears rounded off as they grew into her cheeks. And her shoulders were round. And her figure was a sphere.

Anna began to think about things too soon in life. As early as the third grade she asked her teacher's permission to take

Dobrolyubov and Dostoyevsky from the gymnasium library. The teacher was indignant: "It's too soon for you!" "All right, if you don't let me read them here, I'll get them in the city library." At the age of thirteen "she emancipated herself from God," and ceased to be a believer. At the age of fifteen she pored over the Church fathers—exclusively for the purpose of furiously refuting the priest in class—to the general satisfaction of her fellow students. However, she herself adopted the steadfastness of the Russian Church schismatics as her highest model. She learned: It is better to die than to permit one's spiritual core to be broken.

No one interfered with her receiving the gold medal she deservedly won.[1] In 1917 (what a time for study!) she went to Moscow and entered Chaplygin's Advanced School for Women in the department of philosophy and psychology. As a gold medalist she was paid, till the October coup, a State Duma scholarship. This department prepared teachers of logic and psychology for the gymnasiums. Throughout 1918, earning money by giving lessons, she studied psychoanalysis. She apparently remained an atheist, but she felt with her whole soul how

> . . . immovably on the fiery roses
> The living altar of creation smokes.

She managed to pay her dues to the poetical philosophy of Giordano Bruno and of Tyutchev and even at one time considered herself an Eastern Catholic. She changed faiths greedily, perhaps more often than her dresses. (There were no dresses, and she did not pay all that much attention to them anyway.) And, in addition, at the beginning she considered herself a socialist and that the blood of revolt and civil war was inevitable. But she could not reconcile herself to terror. Democracy, but not atrocities! "Let hands be steeped in blood, but not in mud!"

At the end of 1918 she had to leave the school. (And did the school exist any longer anyway?) With great difficulty she managed to make her way to her parents, where the food situation was better. She arrived in Maikop. An Institute of People's Education for adults and for young people had already been created there. Anna became no more and no less than an acting professor of logic, philosophy, and psychology. She was popular with the students.

1. But what if a schoolgirl challenged the basis of Marxism that way today?

During this period the Whites were living out their last days in Maikop. A forty-five-year-old general tried to persuade her to flee with him. "General, call off the show! Escape before you are arrested!" In those days, at a party for teachers, among themselves, a gymnasium history teacher proposed a toast: "To the great Red Army!" Anna rejected the toast: "Not for anything!" Knowing her leftist views, her friends' eyes popped out. "Because . . . notwithstanding the eternal stars . . . there will be more and more executions," she prophesied.

She had the feeling that all the best people were perishing in this war and only the opportunists were surviving. She already had a presentiment that her great moment was approaching, but she still did not know . . . what it would be.

Several days later the Reds entered Maikop. And a little later a meeting of the city intelligentsia was assembled. The chief of the Special Section of the Fifth Army, Losev, came out on the stage and, in a menacing tone, not far from cursing, began to abuse the "rotten intelligentsia": "What? Sitting on the fence, were you? Waiting for me to invite you? Why didn't you come on your own?" Getting wilder and wilder, he pulled his revolver out of its holster and, brandishing it, screamed: "Your whole culture is rotten! We are going to destroy it and build a new one. And if any of you interfere—we will eliminate you!"[2] And after that he proposed: "Who wants to speak?"

The hall was as silent as the grave. There was not one single bit of applause, and no hand was lifted. (The hall was silent because it was frightened, but the fright was not yet rehearsed, and people did not know that it was compulsory for them to applaud.)

In all probability Losev did not think that anyone would rise to speak, but Anna stood up. "I." "You?" said he rudely. "Well, climb up here, climb up." And she walked the length of the hall and mounted the stage. A big woman, with a big face, even with rosy cheeks, this twenty-five-year-old woman was of the generous Russian type (she got only an eighth of a pound of bread, but her father had a good garden). Thick auburn braids reached to her knees, but as an active professor she could not go around with them like that and had them twisted on top of her

2. Whoever has read Krylenko's speeches in Part I, Chapter 8, already knows all about this.

head, giving herself a second head. And she replied resoundingly:

"We have heard out your ignorant speech. You summoned us here, but it was not announced that it was to bury the great culture of Russia! We came here expecting to see a culture-bearer and found a gravedigger. You would have done better simply to curse us out than to say what you did today! And so are we supposed to understand that you speak in the name of Soviet power?"

"Yes," the already taken aback Losev nonetheless affirmed proudly.

"Well, if the Soviet government is going to have such bandits as you as its representatives, it will fall apart."

Anna had finished, and the whole hall applauded ringingly. (Being all together, they were not yet afraid.) And the evening came to an end on that note. Losev found nothing else to say. People came up to Anna, pressed her hand in the thick of the crowd, and whispered: "You are done for. They are going to arrest you right away, but thank you, thank you! We are proud of you, but you . . . are done for! What have you done?"

At home the Chekists were waiting for her. "Comrade teacher! How poorly you live—a desk, two chairs, and a cot—there's nothing to search. We have never arrested someone like you before. And your father is a worker. How is it that being so poor you could go over to the side of the bourgeoisie?" The Cheka had not yet got itself organized, and they brought Anna to a room in the chancellery of the Special Branch where the White Guard Colonel Baron Bilderling was already under arrest. (Anna witnessed his interrogation and his execution, and later on she went and told his widow: "He died honorably, be proud!")

They took her for questioning to the room where Losev was living and working. When she entered, he was sitting on his stripped bed in his field britches and an unbuttoned undershirt, scratching his chest. Anna immediately demanded of the guard: "Take me out of here!" Losev growled: "All right, I'll wash up and put on those kid gloves in which people make the Revolution."

For one week she awaited her death sentence in a state of ecstasy. Skripnikova now recalls this as the brightest week of her life. If these words are to be understood in their precise meaning, we can believe them completely. That is the kind of ecstasy which descends upon the soul as a reward when you have cast aside all

hopes for impossible salvation and have steadfastly given yourself over to a great deed. (Love of life destroys this ecstasy.)

She did not yet know that the city intellectuals had delivered a petition asking that she be pardoned. (At the end of the twenties this would not have been of any help. And in the beginning of the thirties no one would have been willing to sign.) Losev began to take a conciliatory line in interrogating her:

"In all the cities I have captured, I have never met anyone as mad as you. The city is in a state of siege, and all power here is in my hands, and you called me—a gravedigger of Russian culture! Well, all right, we both lost our tempers. . . . Take back 'bandit' and 'hooligan.' "

"No. I still think the same about you."

"They keep coming to me from morning to night to ask for you. In the name of the honeymoon of Soviet power I am going to have to let you out. . . ."

They let her out. Not because they considered her speech harmless, but because she was a worker's daughter. They would not have forgiven a doctor's daughter that.[3]

That is how Skripnikova began her journey through prisons.

In 1922 she was held in the Krasnodar Cheka, confined there for eight months "for acquaintance with a suspicious individual." There was epidemic typhus and great congestion in that prison. They gave a bread ration amounting to somewhat less than two ounces per day, made from additives too. In her presence a child died in the arms of the woman sitting next to her. And Anna took an oath never to have a child under such socialism as this, never to let herself be tempted by motherhood.

She kept this oath. She lived out her life without a family, and her fate, her unwillingness to compromise, provided her more than once with the chance to return to prison.

Then began what was supposed to be a peaceful life. In 1923 Skripnikova went to enter the Institute of Psychology at Moscow State University. In filling out the security questionnaire, she wrote: "Not a Marxist." Out of kindness of heart her interviewers advised her: "Are you crazy? Who writes answers like that? State that you're a Marxist, and think whatever you please." "But I have no wish to deceive the Soviet government. I have simply never read Marx. . . ." "Well, all the more so in that case."

3. In 1920 Losev himself was shot for banditry and violence in the Crimea.

"No. When I get around to studying Marxism and *if* I accept it . . ." And for the time being she took a job teaching in a school for defectives.

In 1925 the husband of her close friend, an SR, fled to escape arrest. In order to force him to return, the GPU seized as hostages (in the midst of the NEP—hostages?) his wife and her friend, that is, Anna. She was just exactly the same round-faced, big-built woman with tresses that reached down to her knees when she entered her cell in the Lubyanka. (This is where the interrogator assured her: "All those flourishes of the Russian intelligentsia are out of date! *Just look after yourself.*") This time she was imprisoned about a month.

In 1927, for participating in a musical society of teachers and workers, doomed to be destroyed as a possible nest of freethinking, Anna was arrested for what was by then the *fourth* time. She got five years and served them out on Solovki and the Belomor Canal.

From 1932 on they did not touch her again for a long time, yes, and evidently she lived more carefully. Beginning with 1948, however, they began to fire her from her jobs. In 1952 the Institute of Psychology returned to her her already accepted dissertation ("The Psychological Conception of Dobrolyubov") on the grounds of her having received in 1927 a sentence based on Article 58! In this difficult time (she was already in her fourth year of unemployment) a hand reached out to help her from. . . State Security! Lisov, a representative of the central State Security apparatus (well, now, here is Losev again! Was he alive? How little had changed even in the letters! Just that he did not stick up his head openly, like an elk—"los"—but sniffed and darted like a fox—"lisa"), who had arrived in Vladikavkaz, proposed that she *collaborate*, in return for which work would be arranged for her and she would be allowed to defend her dissertation. Proudly she turned him down. Then they nimbly cooked up a charge that eleven years earlier (!), in 1941, she had said:

- that we had been poorly prepared for the war (and had we been well prepared?);
- that the German armies were deployed along our borders, and that we were sending them grain (and were we not?).

And on this occasion she got ten years and landed in the Special Camps, first Dubrovlag in Mordvinia, then Kamyshlag at Suslovo Station in Kemerovo Province.

Sensing that impenetrable wall in front of her, she thought up the idea of writing petitions not just anywhere, but . . . to the United Nations! During Stalin's lifetime she sent off three of them. This was not just some sort of trick—not at all! She actually, genuinely eased her eternally bubbling soul by speaking in her mind's eye with the UN. She actually, during these decades of cannibalism, had seen no other light in the world. In these petitions she lashed out at the savage tyranny in the Soviet Union and asked the UN to intervene with the Soviet government and request it either to reinvestigate her case or else to have her executed, since she could no longer go on living under this terror. She would address the envelopes "personally" to one or another of the Soviet leaders, and inside lay the request that it be sent on to the UN.

In Dubrovlag she was summoned by a clique of the infuriated bosses: "How dare you write to the UN?"

Skripnikova stood there, as always, erect, large, majestic: "Neither in the Criminal Code nor in the Code of Criminal Procedure nor in the Constitution itself is it forbidden. And you ought not to have opened envelopes addressed personally to members of the government!"

In 1956 an "unloading" commission of the Supreme Soviet was functioning in their camp. The only task of this commission was to free as many zeks as possible as quickly as possible. There was a certain modest procedure, which consisted in having the zek say several apologetic words and stand there a bit with drooping head. But no, Anna Skripnikova was not that kind! Her own personal release was nothing in comparison with common justice! How could she accept forgiveness if she was innocent? And she declared to the commission:

"Don't be so overjoyed! All accessories to Stalin's terror are going to have to answer to the people sooner or later. I do not know whom you were personally under Stalin, Citizen Colonel, but if you were an accessory to his terror, then you, too, are going to be sitting on the defendant's bench."

The members of the commission gulped in fury, shouted that

she was insulting the Supreme Soviet in their persons, that this would cost her plenty, and that she would just go on serving time from one toll of the gong to the next.

And in actual fact, because of her vain faith in justice, she had to serve three extra years.

From Kamyshlag she sometimes continued to write to the UN. (In seven years, up to 1959, she wrote a total of eighty petitions to various institutions.) In 1958, because of these letters, she was sent for one year to the Vladimir Political Prison. And there they had a rule: once in every ten days they would accept a petition directed to any authority. During a half-year she sent eighteen declarations from there to different institutions—including twelve to the UN.

And she got her way in the end. She got . . . not execution but a re-examination of her case—the cases of 1927 and of 1952. She said to the interrogator: "Well, what do you want? A petition to the UN is the only means of knocking a hole in the wall of Soviet bureaucracy and compelling the deaf Themis at least to hear something."

The interrogator jumped up and beat his breast: "All the accessories to the 'Stalinist terror'—as you for some reason [!] call the personality cult—will answer to the people? And what am *I* to answer for? What other policy could I execute at that time? Yes, I believed Stalin without any doubts and I did not know anything."

But Skripnikova kept hitting away at him: "No, no, you can't get away with that! One has to bear the responsibility for every crime! Who is supposed to answer for the deaths of millions of innocents? For the flower of the nation and the flower of the Party? The dead Stalin? The executed Beria? While you pursue your political career?"

(Her own blood pressure at this moment was rising to the danger point, she shut her eyes, and everything whirled and flamed.)

And they would still have detained her, but in 1959 a case of this sort was a real curiosity.

And in the years that followed—and she is alive right now—her life has been filled with solicitations on behalf of those still imprisoned or in exile, and those whose sentences still remain on the records—those whom she met in camps in recent

years. She got several of them released. She got others rehabilitated. She has also undertaken the defense of those who live in her own city. The city authorities are afraid of her pen and the envelopes she sends off to Moscow, and in some degree they make concessions to her.

And if everyone were even one-quarter as implacable as Anna Skripnikova—the history of Russia would be different.

2. Stepan Vasilyevich Loshchilin

He was born in 1908 in the Volga region, the son of a worker at the paper factory. In 1921, during the famine, he was orphaned. He grew up to be a lad who was not very bold, and nevertheless at the age of seventeen he was already a member of the Komsomol, and at the age of eighteen he entered a school for peasant youth, and completed it at the age of twenty-one. At this time they were sent out to help in compulsory exactions of breadgrains, and in 1930 in his own native village he participated in the liquidation of the kulaks. He did not remain behind, however, to build the collective farm there, but "got a reference" from the village soviet and with it went off to Moscow. He had difficulty in finding a job . . . as a manual laborer at a construction project. (This was a period of unemployment, and people were swarming into Moscow especially at this time.) A year later he was called up into the army, and there he was accepted as a candidate member and later as a full member of the Party. At the end of 1932 he was demobilized and returned to Moscow. However, he did not wish to be a manual laborer and he wanted to acquire a skill, so he asked the district committee of the Party to assign him as an apprentice at a factory. But evidently he was a pretty incompetent sort of Communist because they turned down even this request, and instead offered him an assignment to the police.

And at this point—he refused. Had he taken a different turn, this biography wouldn't have been written. But this he refused.

As a young fellow he was ashamed to admit to the girls that he was only a manual laborer, that he had no profession. But there was nowhere he could get that profession! And he went to work at the "Kalibr" factory, once more as a manual laborer. At a Party meeting there he naïvely spoke out in defense of a

worker whom the Party bureau had evidently marked down ahead of time for purging. They purged that particular worker just as they had planned, and they began to move in on Loshchilin. The Party dues he had collected from others were stolen from his barracks—and he was unable to make up the missing ninety-three rubles out of his own wages. At that point they expelled him from the Party and threatened to prosecute him. (Does the loss of Party dues really come under the terms of the Criminal Code?) Already in a state of depression, Loshchilin did not appear at work one day. He was fired for absenteeism. With a reference like that he could not get work anywhere for a long, long time. An interrogator kept after him for a while and then left him alone. He kept expecting a trial—but there was none. And suddenly a verdict in absentia was handed down against him: six months of forced labor with a fine of 25 percent of his pay, to be served through the municipal Bureau of Corrective Labor (the BITR).

In September, 1937, Loshchilin went to the buffet at the Kiev Station. (What do we know of our lives? What if he had just gone hungry for another fifteen minutes and gone to a buffet in a different place? . . .) Perhaps he had some sort of lost or seeking expression on his face? He himself does not know. A young woman in the uniform of the NKVD came toward him. (Is that the kind of thing you ought to be doing, woman?) She asked him: "What are you looking for? Where are you going?" "To the buffet." She pointed to a door: "Go on in there." Loshchilin, of course, obeyed her. (She should have spoken like that to an Englishman!) This was the office of the Special Branch. An official sat behind the desk: The woman said: "Detained during tour of the station." And she went out, and never in his life did Loshchilin see her again. (And we, too, will never learn anything about her! . . .) The official, without offering him a seat, began to question him. He took all his documents away from him and sent him to a room for detained persons. There were two men there already, and, as Loshchilin himself relates, "this time without permission [!] I sat down next to them on an unoccupied chair." All three kept silent for a long time. Policemen came and led them off to Cells for Preliminary Detention. A policeman ordered them to turn over their money to him, because, allegedly, in the cell "it would

be taken from them anyway." (What a remarkable identity there is between the police and the thieves!) Loshchilin lied, saying that he had no money. They began to search him, and they took away his money once and for all. And gave him back his makhorka. With two packets of makhorka he entered his first cell, and put the makhorka on the table. No one else, of course, had anything to smoke.

They took him just once from the Cell for Preliminary Detention to the interrogator, who asked him whether he was a thief. (And what a rescue that would have been for him! He should have said then and there that, yes, he was a thief but never caught. And the worst that would have happened to him would have been to be sent out of Moscow.) But Loshchilin replied proudly: "I live by my own labor." And the interrogator directed no other charges at him, and the interrogation came to an end with that, and there was no trial!

He was imprisoned in the Cell for Preliminary Detention for ten days, and then at night they took them all to the Moscow Criminal Investigation Department on Petrovka Street. Here things were crowded and stifling, and it was impossible to get through. The thieves were the rulers here. They took things away from the prisoners and lost them at cards. Here for the first time Loshchilin was astonished by "their strange boldness, their insistence on some kind of incomprehensible superiority." One night the authorities began to haul them all off to the transit prison on Sretenka (that was where it was before Krasnaya Presnya). And there it was even more crowded. People sat on the floor and took turns on the bunks. To those who were only half-clothed—left in this state by the thieves—the police issued clothing—bast sandals and old police uniforms.

Among those sent there with Loshchilin were many others who also *had never been formally charged with anything*, never called to court or tried—but they were transported just like those who had been sentenced. They took them to Perebory, where they filled out an invoice for those who had arrived, and it was only when he got there that Loshchilin found his section: SVE—Socially Harmful Element, sentence four years. (To this very day he is in a state of dismay: After all, my father was a worker, and I myself am a worker, and why then was I an SVE? *It would have been a different matter* if I had been a trader. . . .)

Volgolag. Logging. A ten-hour workday and no days off except the November and May holidays. (And this was *three* whole years before the war!) And once Loshchilin broke his leg and had an operation and spent four months in the hospital and three on crutches. And then he was again sent to logging. And so it was that he served out his four-year term. The war began, but nonetheless he was not considered a 58, and in the autumn of 1941 he was released. Just before being released Loshchilin had his pea jacket stolen, but it was registered on his equipment card. And how he begged the trusties to write off that cursed pea jacket—but no! They refused to take pity on him! They took the cost of the pea jacket out of his "release fund"—double the cost, in fact! And the government inventory prices for those torn cotton-padded treasures were very dear. And so on a cold autumn day they let him out of the camp gates in a cotton camp shirt, with scarcely any money, or any bread or even a herring for the road. The gatehouse guards searched him at the exit and wished him good speed.

And so he was plundered on the day of his release, just as he had been on the day of his arrest.

When the documents were being written up in the office of the chief of the Classification and Records Section, Loshchilin managed to read upside down what was written in his *file*. What was written was: "Detained during tour of station . . ."

He arrived in the city of Sursk, his native area. Because he was ill the district military conscription commissariat exempted him from military service. And that, too, turned out to be bad. In the autumn of 1942, under Order No. 336 of the People's Commissariat of Defense, the district military commissariat conscripted all men of call-up age who could perform physical labor. Loshchilin landed in the *labor detachment* of the Apartment Maintenance Section of the Ulyanovsk garrison. What kind of detachment this was and what the attitude toward it was can be judged from the fact that it contained many young men from the West Ukraine, whom they had managed to conscript before the war, but who had not been sent to the front because they were unreliable. And so Loshchilin landed in another variety of the Archipelago again, a militarized unguarded camp geared to accomplish the same kind of annihilation as other camps—through exhausting the inmates' last strength.

A ten-hour workday. In the barracks two-story bunks without any bedding. (When they went out to work, the barracks was deserted.) They worked and went around in whatever of their own they had when they were taken from their homes and in their own underwear, without baths and without a change. They were paid a reduced wage, from which they were charged for bread (twenty-one ounces a day) and for their other food (which was bad and consisted of a first and second course served them twice a day). And they were even charged for the Chuvash bast sandals which they were issued.

Among the detachment members one was designated the commandant and another the chief of the detachment. But they had no rights. The whole show was bossed by M. Zheltov, the chief of the repair and construction office. He was like a prince who did exactly whatever he liked. When he gave orders, some of the detachment members were deprived of bread and lunch for one or two days at a time. ("Where was there a law like that?" Loshchilin asked. "Even in camp it wasn't like that.") And at the same time front-line soldiers recovering from wounds and still weak entered the detachment. There was a woman doctor attached to the detachment. She had the right to release prisoners from work because of illness, but Zheltov forbade her to. And being afraid of him, she wept, and she did not hide it from the detachment members. (That is *freedom!* That is our freedom, for you!) Everyone got infected with lice, and the bunks were swarming with bedbugs.

But then this was no camp! They could complain! And they did complain. They wrote to the provincial newspaper and to the provincial Party committee. And there was no answer from anywhere. The only response came from the municipal medical department, which carried out a thorough disinfection, gave everyone a good bath, and gave everyone a set of underwear and some bedding—all to be charged against their wages (!).

In the winter of 1944–1945, at the beginning of his third year in the detachment, Loshchilin's own footwear became simply unusable and he did not go to work. He was then and there tried for absenteeism—and given three months of corrective-labor work in that very same detachment with a fine of 25 percent deducted from his wages.

In the spring damp Loshchilin could no longer walk about in

bast sandals, and once again did not go to work. Once again he was sentenced—which, if one counts the other times he had been sentenced in absentia, made the fourth time in his life! This time he was sentenced in the so-called Red Corner of the barracks, and the verdict was three months of imprisonment.

But . . . they did not imprison him! Because it was unprofitable for the state to undertake the maintenance of Loshchilin! Because there was no form of imprisonment which could be worse than this labor detachment.

This was in March, 1945. And nothing worse would have happened, had it not been for the fact that earlier he had written a complaint to the Apartment Maintenance Section of the garrison to the effect that Zheltov had promised to issue secondhand footwear to all of them but did not do so. (And the reason that he alone wrote such a complaint was that any *collective* complaint was strictly forbidden. For any such collective complaint, since it was contrary to the spirit of socialism, they could have given sentences under 58.)

So they summoned Loshchilin to the Personnel Section: "Turn in your work clothes!" And the only thing that that mute slogger had ever gotten for his three years of labor—*his work apron*—Loshchilin took off and put quietly on the floor! And right there stood the precinct policeman who had been summoned by the Apartment Maintenance Section. He took Loshchilin off to the police station and, in the evening, to the prison, but the duty officer at the prison found something not in order in his documents and refused to accept him.

And the policeman then took Loshchilin back to the police station. And the road went past their detachment's barracks. And the policeman said: "Oh, go on, go there and rest; you aren't going to run off anywhere anyway. Wait for me one of these days."

April, 1945, came to an end. The legendary divisions had already rolled to the Elbe and surrounded Berlin. Every day the nation fired off salutes, flooding the heavens with red, green, and gold flares. On April 24 Loshchilin was imprisoned in the Ulyanovsk Provincial Prison. Its cells were just as overcrowded as they had been in 1937. Seventeen and a half ounces of bread, soup made from fodder turnips, or if from potatoes from small potatoes, unpeeled and poorly washed. May 9, Victory Day,

he spent in his cell. (For several days they did not even know about the end of the war.) Just as Loshchilin had greeted the war behind bars, that is how he also bade it farewell.

After Victory Day they sent off to a work colony the *decree prisoners*—in other words, absentees, those tardy at work, and sometimes also those who had been caught at petty thievery at work. What they did there was earth-moving work, construction, and unloading barges. They fed them badly. The camp was a new one. There was no doctor in it and not even a nurse. Loshchilin got chilled and developed an inflammation of the sciatic nerve—and he was driven out to work anyway. He was on his last legs, and his legs had swelled up, and he was in a constant fever. They kept on driving him out to work all the same.

On July 7, 1945, the famous Stalinist amnesty struck. But Loshchilin did not have to last out until he was released under its terms—for on July 24 his own three-month term came to an end, and they let him out then and there.

"All the same," says Loshchilin, "in my soul I am a Bolshevik. When I die, consider me a Communist."

Maybe he's joking, but then again maybe he's not.

■

I do not have here the materials to complete this chapter the way I would like—to demonstrate the striking intersection of Russian lives and the laws of the Archipelago. And I have no hope that I will be granted another secure and unhurried period in which to carry out one more editing of this book, and at that time to include the missing life stories.

I think it would be very appropriate here to include a sketch on the life, prison and camp persecutions, and death of Father Pavel A. Florensky, perhaps one of the most remarkable men devoured by the Archipelago of all time. Well-informed people say of him that he was a scholar rare for the twentieth century, who had attained a professional mastery of a multitude of knowledge. He was educated as a mathematician, and in his youth he had experienced a deep religious conversion and become a priest. The book he had written in his youth, *The Pillar and the Affirmation of the Truth*, is only today coming into its own. He had to his credit many essays in mathematics (topological

theorems, proved much later in the West), in art history (on Russian icons, on religious drama), and on philosophical and religious subjects. (His archive has been in the main preserved and has not yet been published. I have not had access to it.) After the Revolution he was a professor at the Electrical Engineering Institute (where he delivered his lectures in his priest's robes). In 1927 he expressed ideas anticipating those of Wiener. In 1932 he published in the magazine *Socialist Reconstruction and Science* an essay on machines for the solution of problems which were close in spirit to cybernetics. Soon after that he was arrested. His prison career is known to me only at several separate points, which I list with trepidation: exile in Siberia (in exile he wrote works and published them under a pseudonym in the works of the Siberian expedition of the Academy of Sciences), Solovki, and after Solovki was shut down the Far North, and according to some sources the Kolyma. In the Kolyma he studied flora and minerals (in addition to his work with a pick). Neither the place nor the date of his death in camp is known. But according to some rumors he was shot during wartime.

I certainly intended to cite here also the life of Valentin I. Komov from the Yefremov District, with whom I was imprisoned in the years 1950 to 1952 in Ekibastuz, but I simply do not recall enough about him, and I ought to have remembered more details. In 1929, when he was a seventeen-year-old boy, he killed the chairman of the local village soviet and fled. After that the only way he could exist and hide was as a thief. He was imprisoned several times, always as a thief. In 1941 he was released. The Germans carried him off to Germany. Did he collaborate with them? No, he ran away twice and as a result landed in Buchenwald. He was liberated from there by the Allies. Did he stay in the West? No, under his authentic family name ("The Motherland has forgiven, the Motherland calls you!") he returned to his own village, where he married and worked in the collective farm. In 1946 he was imprisoned under 58 for his 1929 crime. He was released in 1955. If this biography were set forth in detail, it would explain much to us about the Russian lives of those decades. In addition, Komov was a typical camp brigadier—a "son of Gulag." (And even in the hard-labor camp he was not afraid to shout at the chief at the general roll call, "Why do we have a Fascist system in our camp?")

Finally, it would have been appropriate to include in this

chapter the biography of some socialist who was exceptional—in personal qualities, in the steadfastness of his views—in order to show his peregrinations through the moves of the Big Solitaire over a period of many years.

And perhaps the biography of some inveterate MVD man—a Garanin, or a Zavenyagin, or else someone not so well known—would have been highly suitable here.

But evidently I am not fated to do all that. Breaking off this book at the beginning of 1967,[4] I do not count on having a chance to return to the theme of the Archipelago.

Anyway, it's enough. I have been with it . . . twenty years.

END OF PART IV

4. No, completing it a year later.

Translator's Notes

Page

1 **The Destructive-Labor Camps:** This, the title of Part III of this work, is a play on words which is not as effective in English translation as in the original Russian. The full official title of Soviet corrective-labor camps in Russian is Ispravitelno-Trudovye Lagerya. The author switches "corrective" labor to "destructive" labor (or "extermination" labor) by rendering this in abbreviated form Istrebitelno-Trudovye.

1 **Hutzul:** The Hutzuls are a mountain people of the Carpathians who speak a Ruthenian dialect—and this quotation is given in that dialect.

9 **the shots of the cruiser Aurora:** Began the October Revolution in Petrograd.

9 **the militia:** Following the October Revolution, when most governmental terminology was radically changed, the police were rechristened "the militia." This is one of the few new revolutionary terms which has stuck, and the ordinary police in the Soviet Union are still called "the militia." Throughout the rest of the book "militsiya" is translated as "police."

10 **Razliv:** When Lenin went into hiding in July, 1917, at a time when he was being sought by the Provisional Government, he found shelter at Razliv, a summer home village about twenty miles from Petrograd, where he camped out in a hunter's shack.

14 **"subbotniki"** (sing.: "subbotnik"): These were "voluntary Saturdays," in which Soviet citizens allegedly volunteered for socially useful labor on their day of rest. In actual fact, as a mass movement sponsored by the Soviet leadership from April, 1919, on, there was nothing voluntary about them.

16 **Central Penal Department:** The term here translated as "penal" could also be translated as "punitive" and is the same Russian term as that used in the official title "punitive detachments," which were sent by the Bolsheviks to carry out bloody reprisals against protest-

Page

ing peasants in rural areas. Hence the name Central Penal Department carried to Soviet ears an implication of terror.

18 **SLON:** This acronym for the Northern Special Purpose Camps is also the Russian word for elephant.

19 **"general work":** "General-assignment work." In Russian "obshchye raboty"—general work or common labor. The general work was whatever primary work the camp was established to perform—logging, construction, mining, heavy labor of any and all sorts.

23 **convoy:** The term in Russian is "konvoi"—escort guard.

25 **kremlin:** The Russian term "kreml" (kremlin) refers to any fortified urban center or citadel—not just the one in Moscow.

25 **capercaillies:** Also known as "cock of the wood"—a large European true grouse, the male of which is approximately the size of a wild turkey.

27 **"pyatina":** A "pyatina" was one of the five administrative territories into which the lands of Novgorod were divided at the end of the fifteenth century.

34 **passing marks:** The word here in Russian is "zachyoty." And there is a play on this term: on the one hand it means "passing marks" in an exam or a course in school, and on the other hand in Soviet prison life it means "time off sentence" given for good work.

35 **Metropole Restaurant:** Refers to the Metropole Hotel Restaurant in the center of Moscow near the Bolshoi Theatre.

43 **work assigner:** Work assignment supervisor. The term in Russian is "naryadchik."

44 **Berry-Yagoda:** In Russian the word "yagoda" means "berry."

59 **S. A. Malsagoff:** *An Island Hell: A Soviet Prison in the Far North*, translated by F. H. Lyon, London, Philpot, 1926, 233 pp.

81 **I. L. Averbakh:** In the Paris edition in Russian (p. 78) the initials of the second editor are given as A. L. Averbakh. In the actual book under reference the initials on the title page are given as I. L. Averbakh.

84 **Mafvei Berman:** It was said by employees of the American Embassy in Moscow that the dacha or country house at Tarasovka, north of Moscow, rented by the Soviet government to the American Ambassador during World War II and the postwar period, had been built by Berman as his personal country residence.

145 **Below Shmidtikha:** This is no doubt a reference to Academician Otto Shmidt, famous Soviet polar explorer and scientist, and Chief of the Northern Sea Route from 1932 to 1939.

149 **"barshchina":** "Barshchina" was the Russian equivalent of corvée. It was the assessment paid the Russian serf owner by his serfs in the form of free labor on his lands, often amounting to three days out of a week. Not all Russians were under the "barshchina" system; about as many paid their assessment in the form of "obrok." See below.

153 **"obrok" system:** Russian serfs under the "obrok" system paid their assessment in the form of "obrok"—money and sometimes produce as well. Frequently the serfs had to work as hired laborers in factories or elsewhere, often at some distance from their native villages, in order to earn the money.

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154 **Arakcheyev:** Count Aleksei Arakcheyev, chief minister under Alexander I. His name became a synonym for cruel discipline, particularly because of his close association with the establishment of the military settlements, the first of which were created in 1810. Arakcheyev became Chief of Military Settlements in 1817 and remained in this post until his death in 1834. The military settlements lasted until 1857, when they were abolished. They were an effort to settle army units on the land under strict military discipline and regulation of all details of village and family life.

160 **"Rabsila":** This was intended to be an abbreviation for "labor forcé" (rabochaya sila), but it could also be envisioned as an abbreviation for "slave force" (rabskaya sila).

168 **Novy Iyerusalim:** Presumably at Istra, about thirty miles northwest of Moscow, where the Novo-Iyerusalim (New Jerusalem) Monastery is located.

186 **your leniency . . .:** These are verses by Pasternak from his poem "Lieutenant Shmidt." They were quoted previously in *The Gulag Archipelago*, Vol. I, Part II, Ch. 4. (Paris edition in Russian, p. 605; American edition in English, p. 614.)

214 **old works:** The reference is presumably to the seizure of manuscripts of *The First Circle* and some other of Solzhenitsyn's works, described in some detail in Zhores Medvedev, *Ten Years after Ivan Denisovich*, New York, Knopf, 1973, Chs. 6 and 7.

220 **a book:** The reference is to the novel by Ilf and Petrov, *The Golden Calf*, translated by John H. Richardson, New York, Random House, 1962.

221 **magara:** A millet-like plant; the seeds were made into a cereal for the zeks, who regarded it as one of the more repulsive of the many repulsive things they were given to eat.

224 **zechka:** "Zechka" is "zek" with a feminine suffix—and the term has a humorous twist.

232 **In my play:** The play referred to is that translated into English under the title *The Love Girl and the Innocent* by Nicholas Bethell and David Burg, New York, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970.

251 **trusty:** The Russian term is "pridurok" (pl.: "pridurki"). For lack of a better word in English this has been translated throughout as "trusty." And this is the closest one can come. The Russian term includes all prisoners who got themselves what were by camp standards soft jobs, and thus did not have to go out and slog away at the general work. The Russian term also has a markedly contemptuous shade, and is closely related etymologically to a whole series of terms referring to half-wits and those who pretend to be half-wits. For instance, "pridurkovaty" means silly, daft, imbecile, etc.

256 **wage laborers:** The translation used here is Engels' revision of Samuel Moore's translation, bearing the date of 1888.

257 **(Memoirs of Survival):** In book form: Boris A. Dyakov, *Povest o Perezhitom*, Moscow, Sovietskaya Russiya Publishing House, 1966, 263 pp.

260 **the magic chain:** The full text: "the magic chain of Koshchei." Koshchei the Deathless is an evil sorcerer in Russian fairy tales. And the reference here is presumably to the famous fairy tale "Marya

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Moryevna," in which Koshchei broke the twelve chains binding him after he had been given three pails of water to drink successively by the story's hero, Prince Ivan.

260 **sharashka:** A "sharashka" was a special prison in which imprisoned scientists and technicians were put to work on important secret scientific assignments. Solzhenitsyn has described the Marfino "sharashka" in his novel *The First Circle.* (Also called a "sharaga.")

262 **Young Guard:** The reference is to the story told in A. Fadeyev, *The Young Guard, a Novel,* Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, no date. The original version of this famous war story of young people who carried on underground resistance activities in the German rear in Krasnodon had to be rewritten by the author in the postwar period at the demand of the Party, to stress the role of the Komsomol and the Communist Party in directing underground resistance.

276 **Kleinmikhel:** The reference is to Pyotr Andreyevich Kleinmikhel, Minister for Ways of Communication, under Tsar Nicholas I, in charge of building the railway from St. Petersburg to Moscow, Russia's first major railway. Kleinmikhel had a reputation for ruthlessness and overexpenditure of government funds.

277 **this very same peasant who had fed the two generals:** The reference is to the short story by M. Y. Saltykov-Shchedrin, "A Story About How One Peasant Fed Two Generals."

277 **Dr. Pravdin:** "Pravda" in Russian means "truth."

287 **Sparrow Hills:** Rechristened the "Lenin Hills."

289 **by Stendhal:** The book referred to is not by Stendhal but about him, by the Russian literary scholar A. K. Vinogradov.

307 **If they're not raking you in . . .:** This is a paraphrase of the original: "If they're not fucking you . . ."

310 **Easter night:** Presumably this refers to much the same scene as that described in Solzhenitsyn's story "The Easter Procession."

317 **Trutnev(!):** The exclamation point underscores the fact that the name is derived from "truten," meaning "drone."

332 **(St. Luke, 11:50.):** The Russian edition has St. Luke, 11:51.

333 **(Matthew, 26:52):** The Russian edition has Matthew 25:52.

333 **Alalykin and Spiridonov—why did they now sign . . .:** This line is missing from the Russian edition.

334 **his grandfather:** Yevtushenko tells how his grandfather, who joined the Red Army, rose to the rank of Deputy Commander of Artillery of the Russian Republic, and was purged in 1938. (Yevgeny Yevtushenko, *A Precocious Autobiography,* New York, Dutton, 1963, pp. 15–16.)

338 **My friend Panin:** Panin is the real name of the individual who is described in *The First Circle* under the fictitious name Sologdin.

353 **seksoty:** "Secret collaborator" is "*sek*retny *sot*rudnik"—hence seksot.

357 **"Banderists":** Followers of the Ukrainian national leader Bandera.

364 **sharply:** In the Russian edition this is misprinted as "rarely" ("redko" instead of "rezko").

367 **The Twentieth Congress:** The Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February, 1956, at which Nikita Khrushchev launched his attack on Stalin's "personality cult."

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370 **To the New Shore:** Vilis T. Latsis, *K Novomu Beregu*, published in 1951. Latsis was Prime Minister of Soviet Latvia.

372 **"residents":** The term "resident" is used in Russian to indicate an important intelligence agent stationed in a nondiplomatic capacity on a long-term assignment in a foreign capital or country.

378 **"obstacle" detachments:** "Obstacle" detachments were used during the war to prevent retreats.

397 **My Testimony:** Anatoly Marchenko, *My Testimony*, translated by Michael Scammell, New York, Dutton, 1969.

427 **"besprizorniki":** In the wake of the war, Revolution, Civil War, and famine all Russia was inundated with a swarm of children who had no homes or parents. They descended on Soviet cities and lived as best they could, by begging and stealing and cadging. They were christened the "besprizorniki" (sing.: "besprizornik")—the homeless children.

428 **The Road to Life:** This Soviet motion picture attracted much attention in the West. It was based on the account of Anton S. Makarenko, *Pedagogicheskaya Poema*, and the film, one of the first Soviet sound films, was directed by N. Ekk and produced by Mezhrabpomfilm in 1931.

428 **ask for it:** See above note to page 307.

431 **(druzhina):** These groups of volunteer deputy policemen were created by decree in 1959, and their authority was strengthened by a subsequent decree of 1969. They operate "under the leadership and subject to the verification of Party organs."

441 **one and all:** A Russian slang word for pickpocket—"shirmach"—which comes from the thieves' language. In the Russian edition this is explained in a footnote, which has been omitted here as superfluous.

476 **On November 30, 1934:** On December 1, 1934, Kirov was assassinated in Leningrad, and Stalin set in motion the machinery of mass terror.

495 **Rastopchin's posted proclamations!:** Count Fyodor Rastopchin was left behind as the governor of Moscow when Tsar Alexander I abandoned the city to Napoleon in 1812.

495 **L. Gumilyev:** The son of the poetess Anna Akhmatova and the executed poet Nikolai Gumilyev.

496 **Komi:** The Komis are a small nationality in the northeast of European Russia.

505 **". . . suckers out!":** The author's point here is that these expressions are incomprehensible to the non-native of the Archipelago, and the translator has tried to preserve this element of outlandishness in the renderings while giving at least something of the real content. For example, the first of the expressions given here, translated as "Skin the rag!," means literally "Take off your jacket!" (i.e., "so that I, a thief, can steal it!").

507 **(cold):** At this point there is a sentence in the Russian text which has been left untranslated because it is meaningless to anyone unfamiliar with the Russian alphabet: "We write this word with the letter 'e' rather than the letter 'ye' in order to indicate the sound of a hard 'z.' "

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509 **"if they're not [beat]ing you . . .":** See above note to page 307.

516 **"struggle for life":** This phrase is in English in the Russian text.

517 **the Ostankino Museum:** The Ostankino Museum of Serf Arts, housed in what was once one of the estates of the noble Sheremetev family in Moscow.

528 **in Russian:** In Russian the phrase is "Prokuror—topor!"

551 **Lieutenant Colonel Tsukanov:** This is presumably the same individual who appears in *The First Circle* under the name Lieutenant Colonel Terentiev.

574 **Khishchuk and Karashchuk:** The name Khishchuk is derived from a Russian word meaning predatory, rapacious, greedy. The name Karashchuk has a very menacing sound to Russian ears, deriving from the juxtaposition of the root of "punish" and the root of "pike"—a vicious fish. Both names are presumably Ukrainian in origin.

587 **Master:** The Russian word here is "Khozyain," with a capital "K." During Stalin's times he was frequently referred to as the "Khozyain." The word means variously owner, proprietor, master, boss, etc. It carries with it a connotation not only of power, but also of ownership.

595 **I Corinthians, 15:51:** The translation given here is that of the King James version of the Bible. A literal translation of the Russian text given by the author indicates a difference between the Russian and English versions of this famous verse: "I tell you a truth: we shall not all die, but we shall all be changed."

608 **The First Glove:** *Pervaya Perchatka,* released by Mosfilm, 1946. Producer: A. Frolov; Director: B. Brozhkovsky.

634 **Nadezhda Mandelstam:** The author of *Hope Against Hope,* and widow of the purged poet Osip Mandelstam.

641 **Sofya Petrovna:** Published abroad in Russian: Lidiya Chukovskaya, *Opustely Dom,* Paris, Librairie des Cinq Continents, 1965; in English: Lydia Chukovskaya, *The Deserted House.* Translated by Aline B. Werth, New York, E. P. Dutton, 1967.

641 **Rozhansky:** See *The Gulag Archipelago,* Vol. I, pp. 48, 49.

Glossary

Agranov, Yakov Savlovich (?–1939). Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs under Yagoda and Yezhov. Played role in preparing show trials. Shot in purges.

Aksakov, Ivan Sergeyevich (1823–1886). Essayist and poet; graduate of St. Petersburg Law School; leader of Slavophile school.

Aldan-Semyonov, Andrei Ignatyevich (1908–). Soviet writer; imprisoned in Far East camps, 1938–1953; author of memoirs.

Alksnis (Astrov), Yakov Ivanovich (1897–1938). Commander of Soviet air force after 1931; died in purges.

Alymov, Sergei Yakovlevich (1892–1948). Soviet poet; wrote popular songs on patriotic themes.

Arakcheyev, Aleksei Andreyevich (1769–1834). Adviser to Tsar Alexander I; known as a strict disciplinarian; fostered special military agricultural colonies for army men.

Aralov, Semyon Ivanovich (1880–1969). Bolshevik revolutionary; served as Soviet diplomat, 1921–1927; deputy director of State Literature Museum, 1938–1941.

Artuzov, (Frauci [?]) **Artur Khristianovich** (1891–1943). Secret police official, of Swiss Italian descent; head of counterintelligence.

Aseyev, Nikolai Nikolayevich (1889–1963). Futurist poet, wrote in the style of Mayakovsky in spirit of revolutionary romanticism.

Balitsky, Vsevolod Apollonovich (1892–1937). Ukrainian secret police chief, 1923–1930 and 1933–1937.

Bandera, Stepan (1909–1959). Ukrainian nationalist; led anti-Soviet forces in Ukraine after World War II; assassinated in Munich.

Bedny, Demyan (1883–1945). Soviet poet.

Belinkov, Arkady V. (1921–1970). Soviet writer; imprisoned in 1943 for his first novel; emigrated to United States.

Belinsky, Vissarion Grigoryevich (1811–1848). Literary critic and ardent liberal, champion of socially conscious literature.

Beloborodov, Aleksandr Georgiyevich (1891–1938). Bolshevik leader in the Urals; ordered execution of Tsar Nicholas and his family in 1918; expelled from Party as a Trotskyite; died in imprisonment.

Beria, Lavrenti Pavlovich (1899–1953). Georgian Bolshevik; headed secret police under Stalin after 1938; executed after his death.

Berman, Matvei (?–1938). One of the chiefs of Gulag; a Deputy Commissar of Internal Affairs, 1936–1938.

Berzin, E. P. (1888–1939). Commander of Latvian Rifles, a pro-Bolshevik military unit; secretary of Dzerzhinsky; chief of Dalstroi (Far East Camp Administration); arrested in 1937.

Biryukov, Pavel Ivanovich (1860–1931). Writer and biographer of Lev Tolstoi; preached Tolstoyan nonresistance to evil; lived mostly abroad after 1898.

Blücher, Vasily Konstantinovich (1890–1938). Commander of Far East Military District, 1929–1938; shot in purge.

Boky, Gleb Ivanovich (1879–1941). Secret police official; member of Supreme Court after 1927; arrested in 1937.

Bosh (Gotlibovna), Yevgeniya Bogdanovna (1879–1925). Bolshevik Revolutionary; held Ukrainian Party posts, 1917–1918; sided with Trotskyites in 1923; suicide.

Bruno, Giordano (1548–1600). Italian Renaissance philosopher.

Bubnov, Andrei Sergeyevich (1883–1940). Old Bolshevik, historian; Central Committee secretary, 1925–1929; chief political commissar of army, 1924–1929; Education Commissar of R.S.F.S.R., purged.

Budenny, Semyon Mikhailovich (1883–1973). Civil War hero; commander of Bolshevik cavalry; headed Southwest Front in World War II.

Bukovsky, Konstantin Ivanovich. Soviet journalist, essayist; father of the dissident Vladimir Bukovsky.

Campesino, El. Revolutionary name of Valentin y Gonzales, Spanish Civil War commander on Republican side; went to Soviet Union in 1939; spent time in camps; fled to France in 1949.

Chaadayev, Pyotr Yakovlevich (1794–1856). Russian philosopher; figured in dispute between pro-Westerners and Slavophiles; wrote critical analysis of Russian culture; declared insane.

Chaikovsky, Nikolai Vasilyevich (1850–1926). Populist revolutionary; organized anti-Bolshevik coup in Archangel during Allied intervention of 1918–1919; fled to Paris.

Chaplygin, Sergei Alekseyevich (1869–1942). Specialist in theoretical mechanics and hydrodynamics; director of Higher Women's

Courses, 1905–1918; member of Soviet Academy of Sciences after 1929.

Chernov, Viktor Mikhailovich (1876–1952). Socialist Revolutionary leader; served in Provisional Government; President of 1918 Constituent Assembly; went abroad in 1920.

Chernyshevsky, Nikolai Gavrilovich (1828–1889). Russian writer and economist; advocated utopian socialism; spent time in prison and exile.

Chudnovsky, Grigory Isaakovich (1894–1918). Bolshevik revolutionary; led storming of Winter Palace in Petrograd; killed on the Ukrainian front.

Chukovskaya, Lidiya Korneyevna (1907–). Soviet literary critic and writer (samizdat).

Dal, Vladimir Ivanovich (1801–1872). Russian lexicographer.

Demidovs. Dynasty of Urals industrialists under Peter the Great.

Denikin, Anton Ivanovich (1872–1947). Tsarist military leader; commanded anti-Bolshevik forces in South, 1918–1920; emigrated.

Dimitrov, Georgi Mikhailovich (1882–1949). Bulgarian Communist leader; chief defendant in 1933 Reichstag trial in Leipzig.

Dobrolyubov, Nikolai Aleksandrovich (1836–1861). Russian literary critic, influenced by German materialist philosophy; favored social criticism in literature.

Dombrovsky, Yuri (1910–). Soviet writer; spent time in camps; wrote about the Stalin period.

Dyakov, Boris Aleksandrovich (1902–). Soviet author of labor-camp memoirs.

Dybenko, Pavel Yefimovich (1889–1938). Soviet military commander; headed Central Asian, Volga, Leningrad military districts.

Dzerzhinsky, Feliks Edmundovich (1877–1926). First chief of the secret police; succeeded by Vyacheslav R. Menzhinsky.

Dzhaparidze, Lyusya. Daughter of Prokofi A. Dzhaparidze.

Dzhaparidze, Prokofi Aprasionovich (1880–1918). Azerbaijani revolutionary; member of Bolshevik government in Baku; among twenty-six Baku commissars executed in 1918 at time of British intervention in Caucasus.

Ehrenburg, Ilya Grigoryevich (1891–1967). Soviet writer and journalist; spent many years in Paris; author of memoirs.

Eideman, Robert Petrovich (1895–1937). Soviet military commander; headed Frunze Military Academy, 1925–1932; chief of Osoaviakhim, the civil deefnse agency, after 1932.

Eikhe, Robert Indrikovich (1890–1940). A founder of Latvian Communist Party; high Siberian official, 1925–1937; Soviet Agriculture Commissar, 1937–1938; arrested in purges.

Feldman, Boris Mironovich (1890–1937). Soviet defense official; chief of Main Administration of Red Army, 1931–1937.

Filipp. *See* Kolychev, Fyodor Stepanovich.

Finn, K. (Finn-Khalfin, Konstantin Yakovlevich) (1904–1973). Soviet writer, playwright.

Florensky, Pavel Aleksandrovich (1882–1943). Religious philosopher with broad scientific interests; anticipated development of cybernetics; died in camp.

Fonvizin, Denis Ivanovich (1744–1792). Russian satirist; wrote comedies about provincial nobility.

Frunze, Mikhail Vasilyevich (1885–1925). Bolshevik Civil War commander; helped organize the Red Army; Defense Commissar in 1925; died after an operation.

Fyodorov, Nikolai Fyodorovich (1828–1903). Russian religious philosopher; influenced Solovyev, Tolstoi, and Dostoyevsky.

Fyodorova, Zoya Alekseyevna (1912–). Soviet movie actress; imprisoned after she had child by U.S. naval officer, Jackson R. Tate.

Gannibal, Pavel Isakovich. Pushkin's uncle; sympathized with Decembrists; exiled in 1826 to Solvychegodsk, later to Solovetsky Islands; freed in 1832.

Gavrilovich, Yevgeny Iosifovich (1899–). Soviet screenwriter.

Gekker, Anatoly Ilyich (1888–1938). Soviet military commander; military attaché in China, 1922, and Turkey, 1929–1933; headed foreign relations department of General Staff, 1934–1937; executed in purges.

German (?–1478). Russian Orthodox saint; founded Solovetsky monastery with Savvaty.

Gershuni, Grigory Andreyevich (1870–1908). A founder and leader of Socialist Revolutionary Party.

Gershuni, Vladimir Lvovich (1930–). Nephew of Grigory Gershuni; Soviet dissident, sentenced in 1949 to ten years as member of anti-Stalin youth group; remanded to mental asylum in 1969.

Gikalo, Nikolai Fyodorovich (1897–1938). Soviet Party official; served as Party secretary in Belorussia, 1932–1937; purged.

Ginzburg, Yevgeniya. Soviet writer; spent eighteen years in prison camps; memoirs, *Journey into the Whirlwind*, appeared in West.

Glezos, Manolis (1922–). Greek Communist leader; led resistance under German occupation; repeatedly jailed after the war.

Glinka, Mikhail Ivanovich (1804–1857). Russian composer; wrote first Russian national opera.

Goloded, Nikolai Matveyevich (1894–1937). Soviet official; served as Premier of Belorussia after 1927; purged.

Golyakov, Ivan Terentyevich (1888–1961). Soviet jurist; assisted

in Red Army purge, 1936–1938; chairman, Supreme Court, 1938–1949.

Gorbatov, Aleksandr Vasilyevich (1891–1973). Soviet military leader; sentenced to fifteen years in 1939, but freed two years later; commanded Third Army in 1943–1945, Soviet airborne forces in 1950–1954 and Baltic Military District in 1954–1958.

Gorky, Maxim (1868–1936). Writer; opposed Bolsheviks at first and lived abroad; returned to Russia in 1931; died under mysterious circumstances.

Grin, Aleksandr Stepanovich (1880–1932). Writer of romantic, fantastic adventure stories.

Gumilyev, Lev Nikolayevich (1912–). Soviet historian and ethnologist; at Leningrad University since 1961.

Herzen, Aleksandr Ivanovich (1812–1870). Liberal writer.

Inber, Vera Mikhailovna (1890–). Soviet writer; author of lyrical stories about Soviet themes and World War II.

Ivanov, Vsevolod Vyacheslavovich (1895–1963). Soviet writer, author of stories and plays about Civil War.

Ivanov-Razumnik (Ivanov, Razumnik Vasilyevich) (1876–1946). Left Socialist Revolutionary; served in Tsarist and Soviet prisons; went to Germany in 1941.

Ivanovsky (Ivanov), Nikolai Pavlovich (1893–1961). Soviet ballet dancer; director of Leningrad Choreographic School, 1940–1952.

Jasienski, Bruno (1901–1941). Polish Communist writer; emigrated to Paris in 1925 and deported by France in 1929; moved to Soviet Union in 1931; arrested in purges of 1937.

Johnson, Hewlett (1874–1966). British churchman; was chairman of a British-Soviet friendship society; backed Soviet causes.

Kabalevsky, Dmitri Borisovich (1904–). Prominent Soviet composer.

Kaganovich, Lazar Moiseyevich (1893–). Close associate of Stalin; headed Soviet railroad system. Ousted from leadership in 1957.

Kaktyn, Artur Martynovich (Kaktins, Arturs) (1893–1937). Latvian revolutionary; held Soviet economic posts; Deputy Premier of Tadzhik Republic after 1934; purged.

Kalinin, Mikhail Ivanovich (1875–1946). Nominal President of the Soviet Union, 1919–1946.

Kalyanov, V. I. Soviet Sanskrit scholar and Buddhologist.

Kapitsa, Pyotr Leonidovich (1894–). Soviet physicist; emigrated to Britain in 1921; returned to Soviet Union in 1935; became Director of Institute of Physics; worked on atomic bomb.

Kaplan, Fanya (Dora) (1888–1918). Left Socialist Revolutionary; executed after unsuccessful attempt on Lenin's life.

Katayev, Valentin Petrovich (1897–). Soviet novelist and playwright; won prominence in Soviet literature.

Kirov, Sergei Mironovich (1886–1934). Close Stalin associate; his murder, reputedly inspired by Stalin, set off the purges.

Kolchak, Aleksandr Vasilyevich (1873–1920). Tsarist admiral; led anti-Bolshevik forces in Siberia, 1918–1920; executed.

Kolnyshevsky, Pyotr (1690–1803). Last hetman of Zaporozhye Cossacks; exiled in 1775 to Solovetsky monastery for twenty-five years.

Kolychev (Filipp), Fyodor Stepanovich (1507–1569). Russian Orthodox Metropolitan of Moscow; a foe of Ivan the Terrible; exiled to Solovetsky monastery; executed by Malyuta Skuratov; canonized.

Kopelev, Lev Zinovyevich (1912–). Soviet specialist in German literature.

Kork, Avgust Ivanovich (1887–1937). Soviet military leader; commander of Moscow Military District, 1929–1935, and Frunze Academy, 1935–1937.

Kornilov, Lavr Georgiyevich (1870–1918). Commander in chief of Russian forces under Provisional Government; fought Bolsheviks in Don area; killed in battle.

Korolev, Sergei Pavlovich (1906–1966). Soviet scientist; leader of Soviet space exploration program.

Kosior, Stanislav Vikentyevich (1889–1939). Ukrainian Bolshevik leader; shot in purges.

Kosmodemyanskaya, Zoya Anatolyevna (1923–1941). Soviet woman guerrilla; tortured and executed by Germans in World War II.

Kovtyukh, Yepifan Iovich (1890–1938). Soviet military commander; legendary hero of Taman retreat in Civil War, 1918; purged.

Kozhevnikov, Innokenti Serafimovich (1879–1931). Bolshevik commander in Civil War; served as Deputy Foreign Minister of Far Eastern Republic before its annexation by Soviet Union in 1922.

Krizhanich, Yuri (1618–1683). Croatian priest; served as Vatican envoy in Eastern Europe; an advocate of Slavic unity.

Kropotkin, Pyotr Alekseyevich (1842–1921). Russian Anarchist leader; lived abroad most of his life.

Kruglov, Sergei Nikiforovich (1903–). Secret police official; served as Minister of Internal Affairs, 1946–1956.

Krupskaya, Nadezhda Konstantinovna (1869–1939). Wife of Lenin, whom she met in 1894 and married in exile in Shushenskoye in 1899; held education posts after 1921.

Krylenko, Nikolai Vasilyevich (1885–1938). Chief state prosecutor, 1918–1931; later People's Commissar of Justice; shot.

Krylov, Ivan Andreyevich (1769–1844). Russian classical fabulist.

Krzhizhanovsky, Gleb Maksimilianovich (1872–1959). Russian power engineer; drafted Russia's first electrification plan; headed State Planning Commission, 1921–1930.

Kun, Bela (1886–1939). Hungarian Communist leader; headed short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919; then sought refuge in Soviet Union; died in purges.

Kurchatov, Igor Vasilyevich (1902–1968). Soviet physicist; headed development of atomic and hydrogen bombs.

Kurganov, I. A. Russian émigré statistician.

Kursky, Dmitri Ivanovich (1874–1932). Bolshevik revolutionary; served as People's Commissar of Justice, 1918–1928.

Kutyakov, Ivan Semyonovich (1897–1942). Soviet military leader; deputy commander, Volga Military District, 1936–1937.

Lakshin, Vladimir Yakovlevich (1933–). Soviet literary critic; wrote about Solzhenitsyn in the liberal monthly *Novy Mir*.

Landau, Lev Davidovich (1908–1968). Soviet physicist; won Nobel Prize in 1962; incapacitated in near-fatal auto accident in 1962.

Lapin, Boris Matveyevich (1905–1941). Soviet writer; wrote in collaboration with Zakhari Khatsrevin; killed while a war correspondent.

Latsis, Martyn Ivanovich (1888–1941). Early Cheka official, 1917–1921; director, Plekhanov Economics Institute, 1932–1937; arrested.

Latsis, Vilis (1904–1966). Latvian Communist novelist; served as Premier of Soviet Latvia, 1940–1959.

Leonov, Leonid Maksimovich (1899–). Soviet novelist; favored psychological and social novels in 1920's.

Leskov, Nikolai Semyonovich (1831–1895). Russian realist writer; known for social flavor of his stories; a master of style.

Levin, Lev Grigoryevich (1870–1938). Soviet physician; headed Therapy Department in Kremlin Hospital; accused in 1938 of causing death of Soviet officials; sentenced to death.

Likhachev, Dmitri Sergeyevich (1906–). Soviet cultural historian; specialist in ancient Russian literature.

Lomov-Oppokov, Georgi Ippolitovich (1888–1938). Soviet economic official; headed Russian oil industry and Donets coal basin in 1920's; later in State Planning Commission and Soviet Control Commission; died in prison.

MacDonald, James Ramsay (1866–1937). British statesman; served as Labourite Prime Minister in 1924 and 1929–1935; established relations with Soviet Union in 1929.

Makarenko, Anton Semyonovich (1888–1939). Educator; organized rehabilitation colonies for juvenile delinquents.

Malenkov, Georgi Maksimilianovich (1902–). Close associate of Stalin; after his death briefly Soviet Party leader, then Premier until 1955; expelled from leadership by Khrushchev in 1957.

Mannerheim, Carl Gustaf (1867–1951). Finnish general and statesman; commanded Finnish forces in World War II; President, 1944–1946.

Marchenko, Anatoly Tikhonovich (1938–). Soviet dissident; wrote about imprisonment, 1960–1966, in *My Testimony*, published in West; served a second term, 1968–1971.

Mayakovsky, Vladimir Vladimirovich (1893–1930). Futurist poet; committed suicide.

Metter, Izrail Moiseyevich (1909–). Soviet screenwriter; wrote on police themes.

Mihajlov, Mihajlo (1934–). Yugoslav writer; author of critical analyses of Soviet Union; in jail, 1966–1970; rearrested in 1974.

Molotov, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich (1890–). Close associate of Stalin; long Premier and Foreign Minister; ousted by Khrushchev in 1957.

Morozov, Nikolai Aleksandrovich (1854–1946). Self-taught Russian scientist; imprisoned in Schlüsselburg Fortress, 1881–1905; served as director of Natural History Institute in Leningrad, 1918.

Morozov, Pavlik (Pavel Trofimovich) (1918–1932). Russian farm boy, hailed by Soviet authorities as a hero of collectivization; he denounced his father for collaborating with kulaks, and was himself slain by peasants.

Nekrasov, Nikolai Alekseyevich (1821–1878). Russian poet.

Nekrasov, Viktor Platonovich (1911–). Soviet writer; active in psychological warfare; often criticized; left Soviet Union in 1974.

Nevsky (Krivobokov), Vladimir Ivanovich (1876–1937). Soviet historian; director of Lenin Library; arrested 1935.

Nikon (Minov, Nikita) (1605–1681). Patriarch of Russian Orthodox Church (1652–1666), whose reforms led to schism with Old Believers.

Nikulin, Lev Veniaminovich (1891–1967). Soviet author of revolutionary adventure stories and historical novels.

Oksman, Yulian Grigoryevich (1894–1970). Soviet literary critic; long imprisoned.

Okunevskaya, Tatyana Kirillovna (1919–). Soviet movie actress; popular in 1930's and 1940's.

Olminsky, Mikhail Stepanovich (1863–1933). Early professional revolutionary; journalist.

Ordzhonikidze, Grigory Konstantinovich (1886–1937). Close associate of Stalin; headed heavy industry; a suicide during purges.

Palchinsky, Pyotr Akimovich (1878–1929). Economist and mining engineer; chief defendant in Shakhty trial of 1928; shot.

Palitsyn, Avraami (Averki Ivanovich) (?–1626). Russian nobleman under Ivan the Terrible; in disfavor after 1588; exiled to Solovetsky monastery, where he became a monk.

Papanin, Ivan Dmitriyevich (1894–). Soviet Arctic explorer; headed first ice-floe station, 1937–1938.

Pechkovsky, Nikolai Konstantinovich (1896–). Soviet opera singer; popular in 1920's and 1930's.

Pellico, Silvio (1789–1854). Italian writer and patriot.

Peter the Great (1672–1725). Tsar of Russia, 1682–1725.

Peters, Yakov Khristoforovich (1886–1942). Secret police official; deputy chief of OGPU, 1925–1930.

Petlyura, Simon Vasilyevich (1879–1926). Ukrainian nationalist leader, 1918–1920; assassinated in Paris.

Petrovsky, Grigory Ivanovich (1878–1958). Bolshevik revolutionary; President of Ukraine, 1919–1939; purged in 1939 and became deputy director of Museum of the Revolution in Moscow.

Pigulevskaya, Nina Viktorovna (1894–). Soviet Orientalist.

Pisarev, Dmitri Ivanovich (1840–1868). Russian literary critic; influenced by German natural materialism.

Plekhanov, Georgi Valentinovich (1856–1918). Marxist philosopher and historian; became Menshevik leader and opposed Bolsheviks.

Pletnev, Dmitri Dmitriyevich (1872–1953). Soviet physician; sentenced to twenty-five years after 1938 show trial.

Pobozhi, Aleksandr. A Soviet railroad construction engineer.

Pogodin (Stukalov), Nikolai Fyodorovich (1900–1962). Soviet playwright; wrote plays about Lenin and White Sea Canal.

Popov, Blagoi (1902–?). Bulgarian Communist; a defendant in 1933 Reichstag trial; exiled to Soviet Union; disappeared in purges.

Postyshev, Pavel Petrovich (1887–1940). Ukrainian Bolshevik leader; arrested in 1938; died in prison.

Primakov, Vitaly Markovich (1897–1937). Soviet military commander; led pro-Bolshevik Cossacks in Civil War.

Priselkov, Mikhail Dmitriyevich (1881–1941). Soviet historian; studied ancient Russian chronicles.

Prishvin, Mikhail Mikhailovich (1873–1954). Russian writer; author of stories about environment and animal life.

Prokofiev, Sergei Sergeyevich (1891–1953). Soviet composer.

Prugavin, Aleksandr Stepanovich (1850–1920). Russian Populist author; wrote about Old Believers and other sects.

Pushkin, Aleksandr Sergeyevich (1799–1837). Russian classical poet.

Putna, Vitovt Kazimirovich (1893–1937). Soviet military commander; military attaché in Japan, Finland, Germany, Britain.

Pyatakov, Georgi Leonidovich (1890–1937). Bolshevik official; held high financial and industrial posts; executed.

Repetto (Elvira Trisolini). Italian coloratura soprano; sang with Italian opera in St. Petersburg, 1885–1887.

Rudzutak, Yan Ernestovich (1887–1938). Associate of Stalin; arrested in 1937 purge; died in prison.

Ruslanova, Lidiya Andreyevna (1900–). Russian folk singer.

Rykov, Aleksei Ivanovich (1881–1938). Close associate of Stalin; Soviet Premier, 1924–1930; shot after 1938 show trial.

Sablin, Yuri Vladimirovich (1897–1937). Soviet military commander.

Saltychikha (Saltykova, Darya Nikolayevna) (1730–1801). Woman landowner in Moscow Province; noted for cruel treatment of serfs.

Savvaty (?–1435). Russian Orthodox saint; founded, with German, the Solovetsky monastery in 1429.

Selvinsky, Ilya (Karl) Lvovich (1899–1968). Soviet writer; led constructivist school in 1920's.

Serafimovich (Popov), Aleksandr Serafimovich (1863–1949). Soviet writer; classical author of proletarian, revolutionary prose.

Serebryakova, Galina Iosifovna (1905–). Soviet writer; author of prison-camp memoirs.

Shaginyan, Marietta Sergeyevna (1888–). Soviet writer; author of detective stories and a novel on industrialization theme.

Shalamov, Varlam Tikhonovich (1907–). Soviet writer; spent seventeen years in Kolyma camps; author of *Kolyma Stories* (Paris, 1969).

Shcherbatsky, Fyodor Ippolitovich (1866–1942). Buddhologist.

Sheinin, Lev Romanovich (1906–1967). Soviet prosecuting and investigatory official; wrote spy stories after 1950.

Shekhter, Boris Semyonovich (1900–1961). Soviet composer.

Shereshevsky, Nikolai Adolfovich (1885–1961). Soviet physician; witness in 1938 purge trial; accused in "doctors' plot," 1952–1953.

Shevchenko, Taras Grigoryevich (1814–1861). Ukrainian classical poet; exiled for political activities, 1847–1857.

Shklovsky, Viktor Borisovich (1893–). Soviet writer and memoirist; founded formalistic school.

Shlikhter, Aleksandr Grigoryevich (1868–1940). Bolshevik revolutionary; agricultural economist; Ukrainian Commissar of Agriculture, 1927–1929; then director of Ukrainian Institute of Marxism-Leninism.

Shostakovich, Dmitri Dmitriyevich (1906–1975). Soviet composer.

Sikorski, Wladyslaw (1881–1943). Military leader of Polish exiles.

Skuratov, Malyuta (Belsky, Grigory Lukyanovich (?–1572). Aide of Ivan the Terrible; headed the Oprichnina, a policelike group.

Slutsky, Boris Abramovich (1919–). Soviet poet and translator.

Smirnov, Ivan Nikitovich (1881–1936). People's Commissar for Communications, 1923–1927; expelled from Party; shot after trial.

Sofronitsky, Vladimir Vladimirovich (1901–). Soviet pianist.

Solovyev, Vladimir Sergeyevich (1853–1900). Religious philosopher; sought synthesis of Orthodox faith and Western thought.

Solts, Aron Aleksandrovich (1872–1945). Soviet judicial and prosecuting official; member of Party's Central Control Commission; removed from all posts in 1938.

Spiridonova, Mariya Aleksandrovna (1884–1941). Russian revolutionary; condemned to hard labor in 1906 after assassination of a Tsarist official; leader of Left Socialist Revolutionaries after February, 1917; sentenced to year in jail in late 1918; amnestied; quit politics.

Starokadomsky, Mikhail Leonidovich (1901–1954). Soviet composer.

Steklov, Yuri Mikhailovich (1873–1941). Soviet historian; edited the newspaper *Izvestiya* in 1920's; purged.

Stuchka (Stucka), Pyotr Ivanovich (1865–1932). Latvian Bolshevik; headed short-lived Latvian Soviet Government, 1918–1919; served as chairman of Soviet Supreme Court, 1923–1932.

Tanev, Vasil (1898–?). Bulgarian Communist; a defendant in 1933 Reichstag trial; exiled to Soviet Union; disappeared in purges.

Tendryakov, Vladimir Fyodorovich (1923–). Soviet author; writes psychological stories on moral and social conflicts.

Tess (Sosyura), Tatyana Nikolayevna (1906–). Soviet journalist.

Tikhon, Patriarch (1865–1925). Head of Russian Orthodox Church after 1917; detained 1922–1923 on oppositionist charges.

Tikhonov, Aleksandr Nikolayevich (1880–1956). Soviet writer; was associated with Gorky; headed publishing houses after 1917 Revolution.

Timofeyev-Ressovsky, Nikolai Vladimirovich (1900–). Soviet geneticist; worked in Germany, 1924–1945; sent to prison camp on return to Soviet Union; rehabilitated under Khrushchev.

Todorsky, Aleksandr Ivanovich (1894–1965). Soviet military commander; headed Air Force Academy, 1934–1936; in prison camps, 1938–1953.

Tolstoi, Aleksei Nikolayevich (1882–1945). Soviet writer of psychological realistic school; emigrated after Revolution and returned in 1922; wrote major historical novels.

Trotsky, Lev Davidovich (1879–1940). Associate of Lenin; first

Soviet Defense Commissar; deported by Stalin; slain in Mexico City.

Tsiolkovsky, Konstantin Eduardovich (1857–1935). Russian inventor; laid groundwork for space travel.

Tukhachevsky, Mikhail Nikolayevich (1893–1937). Soviet military leader; shot in 1937 on trumped-up treason charges.

Tynyanov, Yuri Nikolayevich (1895–1943). Soviet writer and literary scholar.

Tyutchev, Fyodor Ivanovich (1803–1873). Russian writer of philosophical lyrical school.

Uborevich, Iyeronim Petrovich (1896–1937). Soviet military commander; headed North Caucasus, Moscow, and Belorussian military districts.

Ulyanov, Aleksandr Ilyich (1866–1887). Lenin's older brother; executed after unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Alexander III.

Unshlikht, Iosif Stanislavovich (1879–1938). Soviet official; worked in Cheka (1921–1923), State Planning Commission (1930–1933), and headed Soviet civil aviation, 1933–1935.

Urusov, Aleksandr Ivanovich (1843–1900). Russian lawyer; well known as a court orator.

Utyosov, Leonid Osipovich (1895–). Soviet orchestra leader and variety-stage star.

Vakhtangov, Yevgeny Bagrationovich (1883–1922). Innovative stage director; founded Moscow's Vakhtangov Theatre.

Vasilyev, Pavel Nikolayevich (1910–1937). Soviet poet; wrote about village themes; accused of idealizing kulaks.

Vavilov, Nikolai Ivanovich (1887–1943). Prominent plant geneticist; headed applied botany and genetics institutes; arrested 1940.

Vavilov, Sergei Ivanovich (1891–1951). Soviet physicist; brother of Nikolai Vavilov; director of Physics Institute, 1932–1945; president of Academy of Sciences, 1945–1951.

Vinogradov, Vladimir Nikitich (1882–1964). Soviet physician; witness in 1938 purge trial; figured in "doctors' plot," 1952–1953.

Vishnevsky, Vsevolod Vitalyevich (1900–1951). Soviet playwright and screenwriter; author of plays about Red Army.

Vlasov, Andrei Andreyevich (1900–1946). Red Army officer; captured by Germans in 1942; led forces against Soviet Union; executed.

Volkonskaya, Mariya Nikolayevna (1805–1863). Russian princess; wife of Sergei G. Volkonsky, a Decembrist, whom she followed into exile in Siberia in 1827, living there until 1855; wrote about hard-labor system.

Voloshin, Maksimilian Aleksandrovich (1878–1932). Symbolist poet and watercolorist; opposed Bolsheviks.

Voroshilov, Kliment Yefremovich (1881–1969). Close associate of Stalin; long Defense Commissar; Soviet President, 1953–1960.

Vyshinsky, Andrei Yanuaryevich (1883–1954). Lawyer and diplomat; chief prosecutor in show trials, 1936–1938; Foreign Minister, 1949–1953.

Yagoda, Genrikh Grigoryevich (1891–1938). Secret police official; People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, 1934–1936; executed.

Yakir, Iona Emmanuilovich (1896–1937). Soviet military commander; headed Kiev Military District, 1935–1937; purged.

Yakubovich, Pyotr Filippovich (1860–1911). Russian poet; translator of Baudelaire; wrote memoirs about his Tsarist exile.

Yegorov, Aleksandr Ilyich (1883–1939). Soviet military commander; military attaché in China, 1925–1926; headed Belorussian Military District, 1927–1931; chief of General Staff, 1931–1937.

Yenukidze, Avel Safronovich (1877–1937). Bolshevik official; secretary of Central Executive Committee, 1918–1935; shot in purges.

Yezhov, Nikolai Ivanovich (1895–1939). Secret police official; People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, 1936–1938.

Zaozersky, Aleksandr Ivanovich (1874–1941). Russian historian.

Zavenyagin, Avraami Pavlovich (1901–1956). Soviet metallurgical executive; headed Magnitogorsk steel plant, 1933–1937; Norilsk copper-nickel complex (after 1938), and nuclear weapons program, 1953–1956.

Zelinsky, Korneli Lyutsianovich (1896–1970). Soviet literary critic; a founder of constructivist school.

Zhuk, Sergei Yakovlevich (1892–1957). Soviet hydraulic engineer; supervised canal projects built with forced labor.

Zhukov, Georgi (Yuri) Aleksandrovich (1908–). Soviet journalist; headed State Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, 1957–1962; then *Pravda* commentator.

Zinoviev (Apfelbaum), Grigory Yevseyevich (1883–1936). Associate of Lenin; expelled from Party in 1927; shot after 1936 show trial.

Zoshchenko, Mikhail Mikhailovich (1895–1958). Soviet satirist; known for his comic novellas; often in disfavor.

Zosima (?–1478). Russian Orthodox saint; first abbot of Solovetsky monastery.

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THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO

Also by Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn

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We Never Make Mistakes
One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich

Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn

THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO

1918–1956

An Experiment in Literary Investigation

V–VII

Translated from the Russian by Harry Willetts

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Preface to the English Translation

To those readers who have found the moral strength to overcome the darkness and suffering of the first two volumes, the third volume will disclose a space of freedom and struggle. The secret of this struggle is kept by the Soviet regime even more zealously than that of the torments and annihilation it inflicted upon millions of its victims. More than anything else, the Communist regime fears the revelation of the fight which is conducted against it with a spiritual force unheard of and unknown to many countries in many periods of their history. The fighters' spiritual strength rises to the greatest height and to a supreme degree of tension when their situation is most helpless and the state system most ruthlessly destructive.

The Communist regime has not been overthrown in sixty years, not because there has not been any struggle against it from inside, not because people docilely surrendered to it, but because it is inhumanly strong, in a way as yet unimaginable to the West.

In the world of concentration camps, corrupt as everything within the Soviet system, the struggle began (alas, it could not begin otherwise) by terrorist actions. Terrorism is a condemnable tool, but in this case it was generated by forty years of unprecedented Soviet state terrorism, and this is a striking instance of evil generating evil. It shows that when evil assumes inhuman dimensions, it ends up by forcing people to use evil ways even to escape it. However, the concentration camp terrorism of the fifties, out of which heroic uprisings were born later on, was essentially different from the "left-wing" revolutionary terrorism which is shaking the Western world in our days, in that young Western terrorists,

saturated with boundless freedom, play with innocent people's lives and kill innocent people for the sake of their unclear purposes or in order to gain material advantages. Soviet camp terrorists in the fifties killed proved traitors and informers in defense of their right to breathe.

However, there is no kind of terrorism that can be considered a pride of the twentieth century. On the contrary, terrorism has made it into one of the most shameful centuries of human history. And there is no guarantee that the darkest abyss of terrorism already lies behind us.

November 1977
Vermont

THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO

PART V

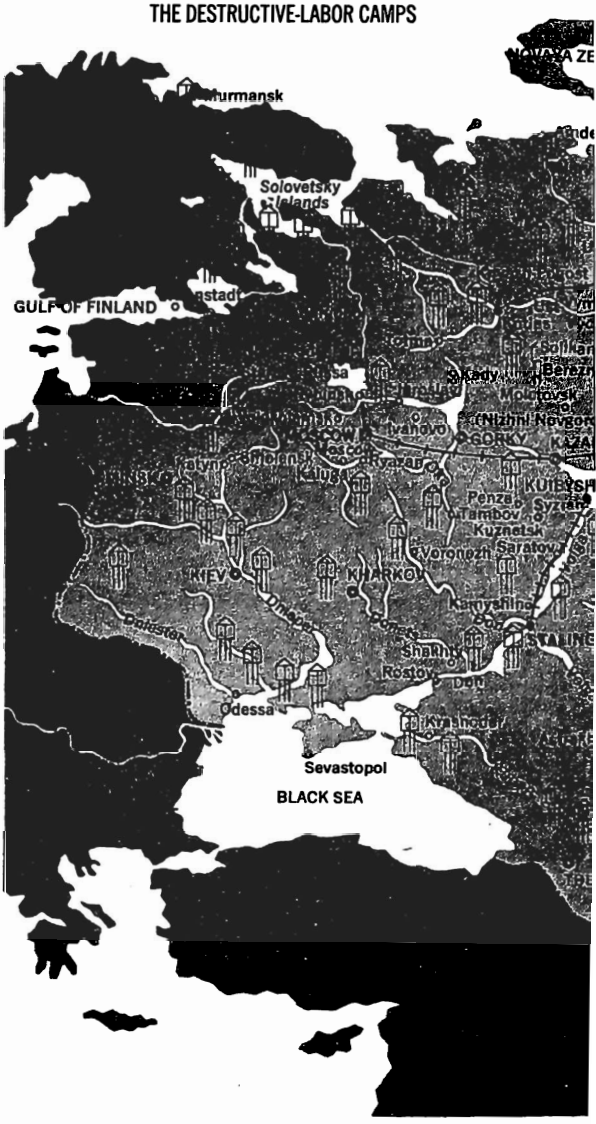
Katorga

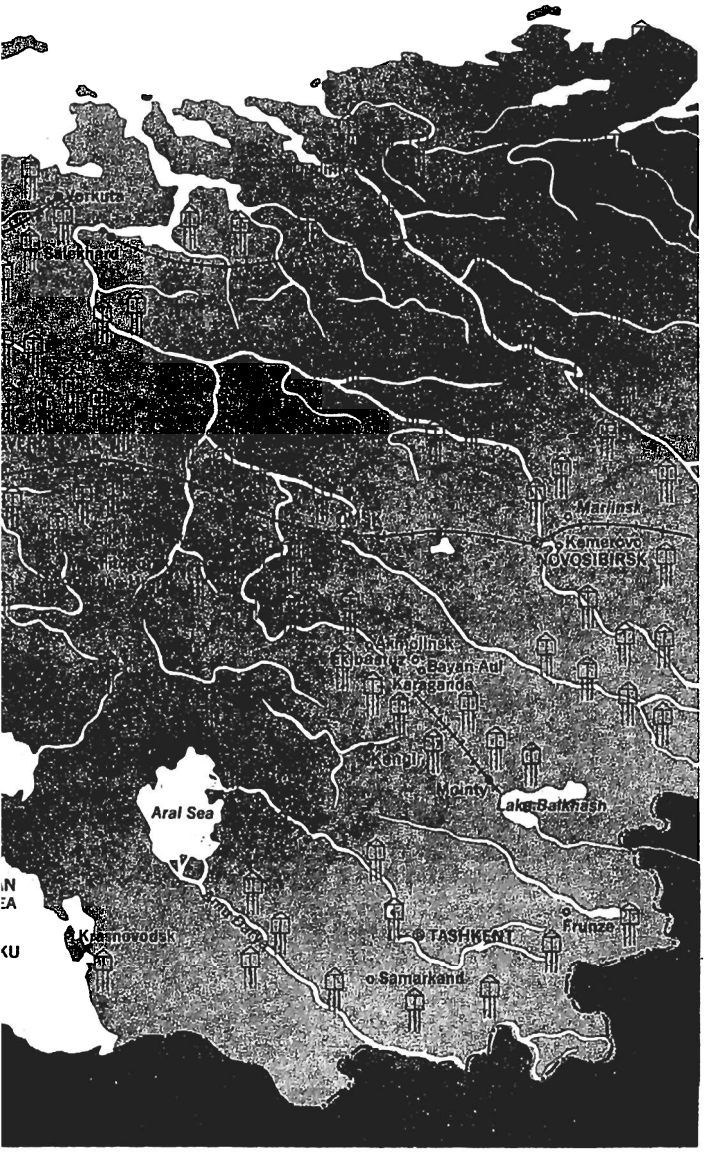
■

"We shall turn the Siberia of *katorga,* Siberia in shackles, into a Soviet, socialist Siberia."

STALIN

THE DESTRUCTIVE-LABOR CAMPS

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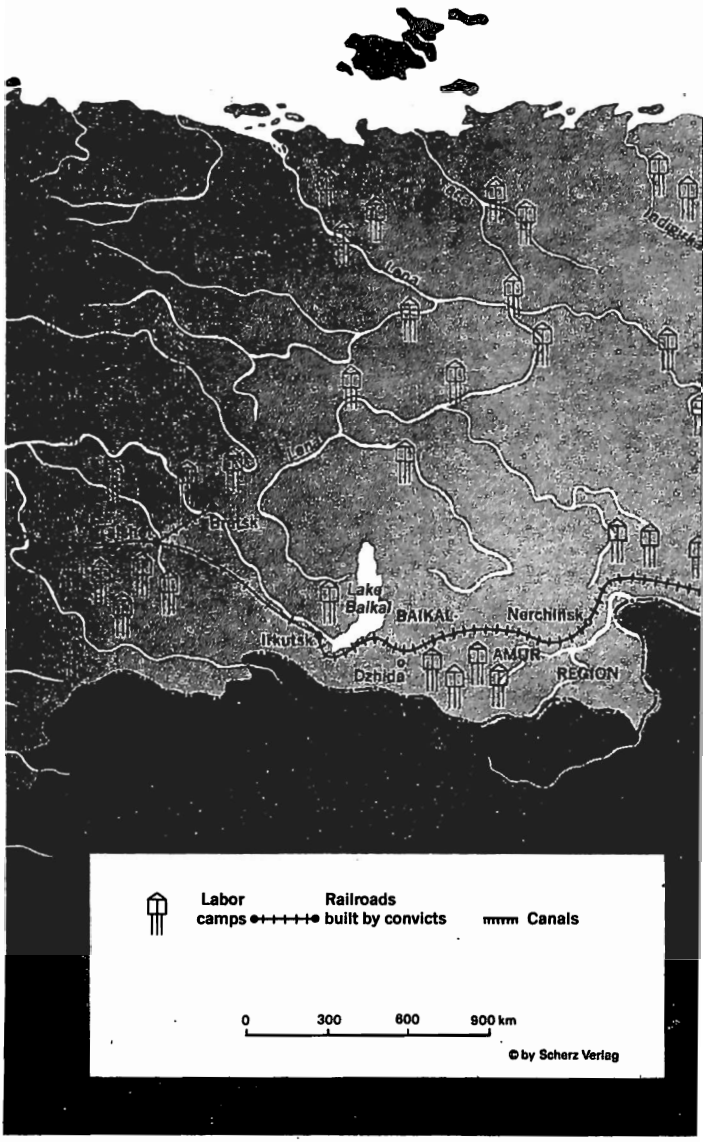
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SEA OF OKHOTSK
Petropa
ovet va Gavan
Nakhodka
Vladivostok

Chapter 1

■

The Doomed

Revolution is often rash in its generosity. It is in such a hurry to disown so much. Take the word *katorga,** for instance. Now, *katorga* is a good word, a word with some weight in it, nothing like the runtish abortion DOPR or the pipsqueak ITL.* *Katorga* descends from the judicial bench like the blade of a guillotine, stops short of beheading the prisoner but breaks his spine, shatters all hope there and then in the courtroom. The word *katorzhane* holds such terror that other prisoners think to themselves: "These must be the real cutthroats!" (It is a cowardly but comfortable human failing to see yourself as not the worst of men, nor in the worst position. *Katorzhane* wear *numbers!* They are obviously beyond redemption! Nobody would pin a number on you or me! . . . They will, though—you'll see!)

Stalin was very fond of old words; he never forgot that they can cement a state together for centuries. It was not to meet some proletarian need that he grafted on again words too hastily lopped off: "officer," "general," "director," "supreme."* And twenty-six years after the February Revolution had abolished "*katorga,*" Stalin reintroduced it. This was in April, 1943, when he began to feel that he was no longer sliding downhill. For the home front the first fruits of the people's victory at Stalingrad were the decree on the militarization of the railroads (providing for trial of women and little boys by court-martial) and, on the following day (April 17), the decree introducing the *katorga* and the gallows. (The gallows is another fine old institution, much superior to a short

*See Notes, page 530.

sharp pistol shot: it makes death a leisurely process, which can be exhibited in detail to a large crowd of people.) Each subsequent victory drove fresh contingents of the doomed into *katorga* or to the gallows—first from the Kuban and the Don, then from the left-bank Ukraine and the Kursk, Orel, and Smolensk regions. On the heels of the army came the tribunals, publicly hanging some people on the spot, dispatching others to the newly created *katorga* forced-labor camps.

The first of them, of course, was Mine No. 17 at Vorkuta (those at Norilsk and Dzhezkazgan came soon after). Little attempt was made to conceal their purpose: the *katorzhane* were to be done to death. These were, undisguisedly, murder camps: but in the Gulag tradition murder was protracted, so that the doomed would suffer longer and put a little work in before they died.

They were housed in "tents," seven meters by twenty, of the kind common in the north. Surrounded with boards and sprinkled with sawdust, the tent became a sort of flimsy hut. It was meant to hold eighty people, if they were on bunk beds, or one hundred on sleeping platforms. But *katorzhane* were put into them two hundred at a time.

Yet there was no reduction of average living space—just a rational utilization of accommodation. The *katorzhane* were put on a twelve-hour working day with two shifts, and no rest days, so that there were always one hundred at work and one hundred in the hut.

At work they were cordoned off by guards with dogs, beaten whenever anybody felt like it, urged on to greater efforts by Tommy guns. On their way back to the living area their ranks might be raked with Tommy-gun fire for no good reason, and the soldiers would not have to answer for the casualties. Even at a distance a column of exhausted *katorzhane* was easily identified —no ordinary prisoners dragged themselves so hopelessly, so painfully along.

Their twelve working hours were measured out in full to the last tedious minute.

Those quarrying stone for roadmaking in the polar blizzards of Norilsk were allowed ten minutes for a warm-up once in the course of a twelve-hour shift. And then their twelve-hour rest was wasted in the silliest way imaginable. Part of these twelve hours went into moving them from one camp area to another, parading them, searching them. Once in the living area, they were immedi-

ately taken into a "tent" which was never ventilated—a windowless hut—and locked in. In winter a foul sour stench hung so heavy in the damp air that no one unused to it could endure it for two minutes. The living area was even less accessible to the *katorzhane* than the camp work area. They were never allowed to go to the latrine, nor to the mess hut, nor to the Medical Section. All their needs were served by the latrine bucket and the feeding hatch. Such was Stalin's *katorga* as it took shape in 1943–1944: a combination of all that was worst in the camps with all that was worst in the prisons.[1]

Their twelve hours of *rest* also included inspections, morning and evening—no mere counting of heads, as with ordinary zeks,* but a full and formal roll call at which each of a hundred *katorzhane* twice in every twenty-four hours had to reel off smartly his number, his abhorrent surname, forename, and patronymic, where and in what year he was born, under which article of the Criminal Code he was convicted and by whom, the length of his sentence and when it would expire: while the other ninety-nine, twice daily, listened to all this and suffered torments. Then again, food was distributed twice in the course of these twelve hours: mess tins were passed through the feeding hatch, and through the feeding hatch they were collected again. No *katorzhanin* was permitted to work in the kitchens, nor to take around the food pails. All the serving was done by the thieves—and the more brazenly, the more ruthlessly they cheated the accursed *katorzhane,* the better they lived themselves and the more the camp bosses liked it; as always when the 58's (politicals) were footing the bill, the interests of the NKVD and of the thieves coincided.

According to the camp records, which were not meant to preserve for history the fact that political prisoners were also starved to death, they were entitled to supplementary "miner's rations" and "bonus dishes," which were miserable enough even before three lots of thieves got at them. This was another lengthy procedure conducted through the feeding hatch—names were called

1. We have Chekhov's word for it that the Tsarist *katorga* was much less inventive. The *katorzhane* in the jail at Aleksandrovskaya (Sakhalin) could not only go out into the yard or to the latrine at all hours of the day and night (latrine buckets were not in use there at all), but at any time during the day could go into the town! Stalin, then, was the first to understand the word *katorga* in its original sense—a galley in which the rowers are shackled to their oars.

out one by one, and dishes exchanged for coupons. And when at last you were about to collapse onto the sleeping platform and fall asleep, the hatch would drop again, once again names were called, and they would start reissuing the same coupons for use the next day. (Ordinary zeks had none of this bother with coupons—the foreman took charge of them and handed them in to the kitchen.)

So that out of twelve leisure hours in the cell, barely four remained for undisturbed sleep.

Then again, *katorzhane* were of course paid no money, nor had they any right to receive parcels or letters (the memory of their former freedom must fade in their muddled, dully aching heads, till there was nothing left in the inscrutable polar night but work and barracks).

The *katorzhane* responded nicely to this treatment and quickly died.

The first *alphabet* at Vorkuta—twenty-eight letters,* with numbers from 1 to 1000 attached to each of them—the first 28,000 prisoners in Vorkuta all passed under the earth within a year.

We can only be surprised that it was not in a single month.[2]

A train was sent to Cobalt Mine No. 25 at Norilsk to pick up ore, and some *katorzhane* lay down in front of the locomotive to end it all quickly. A couple of dozen prisoners fled into the tundra in desperation. They were located by planes, shot, and their bodies stacked where the men lined up for work assignment would see them.

At No. 2 Mine, Vorkuta, there was a Women's Camp Division. The women wore numbers on their backs and on their head scarves. They were employed on all underground jobs, and—yes—they even overfulfilled the plan! . . .[3]

But I can already hear angry cries from my compatriots and contemporaries. Stop! *Who are* these people of whom you dare to speak? Yes! They were there to be destroyed—and rightly so! Why, these were traitors, Polizei,* burgomasters! They got what they asked for! Surely you are not sorry for them? (If you are, of

2. When Chekhov was there, the whole convict population of Sakhalin was—how many would you think?—5,905. Six letters of the alphabet would have been enough for all of them. Ekibastuz as we knew it was roughly as big, and Spassk very much bigger. The name Sakhalin strikes terror, yet it was really just one Camp Division! In Steplag alone there were twelve complexes as big as that of Sakhalin, and there were ten camps like Steplag. You can calculate how many Sakhalins we had.

3. On Sakhalin there was no hard labor for women (Chekhov).

course, further criticism is outside the competence of literature, and must be left to the *Organs.*)* And the women there were German bedstraw, I hear *women's* voices crying. (Am I exaggerating? It was our women who called other women "German bedstraw," wasn't it?)

I could most easily answer in what is now the conventional fashion—by *denouncing the cult.* I could talk about a few untypical cases of people sent to *katorga.* (The three Komsomol girl volunteers, for instance, who went up in a fighter bomber but were afraid to drop their bombs on the target, jettisoned them in open country, returned to base safely and reported that they had carried out their mission. Later on, her Komsomol conscience began troubling one of them, and she told the Komsomol organizer of her air squadron, also a girl, who of course went straight to the Special Section. The three girls collected twenty years of *katorga* each.) I could cry shame: to think that honest Soviet people like these were punished like criminals at the despot Stalin's whim! And I could wax indignant not so much at Stalin's high-handedness as about the fateful errors in the treatment of Komsomols and Communists, now happily corrected.

It would, however, be improper not to examine the question in depth.

First, a few words about our women, who, as everybody knows, are now emancipated. Not from working twice as hard, it's true, but from religious marriage, from the yoke of social contempt, and from cruel mothers-in-law. Just think, though—have we not wished upon them something worse than Kabanikha* if women who behave as though their bodies and their personal feelings are indeed their own are to be condemned as criminals and traitors? Did not the whole of world literature (before Stalin) rapturously proclaim that love could not be contained by national boundaries? By the will of generals and diplomats? But once again we have adopted Stalin's yardstick: except as decreed by the Supreme Soviet, thou shalt not mate! Your body is, first and foremost, the property of the Fatherland.

Before we go any further, how old were these women when they closed with the enemy in bed instead of in battle? Certainly under thirty, and often no more than twenty-five. Which means that from their first childhood impression onward they had been educated *after* the October Revolution, been brought up in Soviet

schools and on Soviet ideology! So that our anger was for the work of our own hands? Some of these girls had taken to heart what we had tirelessly dinned into them for fifteen years on end—that there is no such thing as one's own country, that the Fatherland is a reactionary fiction. Others had grown a little bored with our puritanical Lenten fare of meetings, conferences, and demonstrations, of films without kisses and dancing at arm's length. Yet others were won by politeness, by gallantry, by male attention to the niceties of dress and appearance and to the ritual of courtship, in which no one had trained the young men of our Five-Year Plan epoch, or the officers of Frunze's army. Others again were simply hungry—yes, hungry in the most primitive sense: they had nothing to put in their bellies. And perhaps there was a fifth group, who saw no other way of saving themselves and their relatives, of avoiding separation from their families.

In the town of Starodub, in Bryansk Province, where I arrived hot on the heels of the retreating enemy, I was told that a Hungarian garrison had been stationed there for a long time, to protect the town from partisan raids. Orders came transferring them elsewhere, and dozens of local women, abandoning all shame, went to the station and wept as they said goodbye to the occupying troops—wept more loudly, added a sarcastic shoemaker, than "when they had seen their own husbands off to the war."

The military tribunal reached Starodub some days later. It would hardly fail to act on information received. It doubtless sent some of the weeping women of Starodub to Mine No. 2 at Vorkuta.

But who is really to blame for all this? Who? I ask you. Those women? Or—fellow countrymen, contemporaries—we ourselves, all of us? What was it in *us* that made the occupying troops much more attractive to our women? Was this not one of the innumerable penalties which we are continually paying, and will be paying for a long time yet, for the path we so hastily chose and have so stumblingly followed, with never a look back at our losses, never a cautious look ahead?

Perhaps all these women and girls deserved moral censure (though they, too, should have been given a hearing), perhaps they deserved searing ridicule—but to be sent to *katorga?* to the polar death house?

"Well, it was Stalin who sent them there! And Beria!"

I'm sorry, but it wasn't! Those who sent them there, kept them

there, did them to death, now sit with other pensioners on social service councils, looking out for any lowering of moral standards. And the rest of us? We hear the words "German bedstraw" and nod in agreement. The fact that to this day we consider all these women guilty is much more dangerous for us than that they were once *inside.*

"All right, then, but the men at least were in for good reasons? They were traitors to their country, and to their class."

Here, too, we could prevaricate. We might recall (it would be quite true) that the worst criminals did not of course sit still and wait for our tribunals and the gallows. They made for the West as fast as they could, and many of them got away. While our punitive organs reached their target figures by including people innocent as lambs (denunciations by neighbors were a great help here). So-and-so had Germans billeted in his apartment—what made them take a liking to him? Somebody else carried hay for the Germans on his sledge—a straightforward case of collaboration with the enemy.[4]

We could then play the thing down, put all the blame on the *Stalin cult* again: there were excesses, now they have been corrected. All quite normal.

But since we have begun, let us go on.

What about the schoolteachers? Those whom our army in its panicky recoil abandoned with their schools, and pupils, for a year. For two years, or even for three. The quartermasters had been stupid, the generals no good—so what must the teachers do now? Teach their children or not teach them? And what were the kids to do—not kids of fifteen, who could earn a wage, or join the partisans, but the little kids? Learn their lessons, or live like sheep for two or three years to atone for the Supreme Commander's mistakes? If daddy doesn't give you a cap you let your ears freeze —is that it?

For some reason no such question ever arose either in Denmark or in Norway or in Belgium or in France. In those countries it was not felt that a people placed under German rule by its own foolish government or by force of overwhelming circumstances must thereupon stop living altogether. In those countries schools went on working, as did railways and local government.

4. To be fair, we should not forget that from 1946 such people were sometimes regraded and their twenty years of *katorga* commuted to ten years of corrective labor.

Somebody's brains (theirs, of course!) are 180 degrees out of true. Because in our country teachers received anonymous letters from the partisans: "Don't dare teach! You will be made to pay for it!" Working on the railways also became collaboration with the enemy. As for participation in local administration—that was treason, unprecedented in its enormity.

Everybody knows that a child who once drops out of school may never return to it. Just because the greatest strategic genius of all times and all nations had made a blooper, was the grass to wither till he righted it or could it keep growing? Should children be taught in the meantime, or shouldn't they?

Of course, a price would have to be paid. Pictures of the big mustache would have to be taken out of school, and pictures of the little mustache perhaps brought in. The children would gather round the tree at Christmas instead of New Year's, and at this ceremony (as also on some imperial anniversary substituted for that of the October Revolution) the headmaster would have to deliver a speech in praise of the splendid new life, however bad things really were. But similar speeches had been made in the past —and life had been just as bad then.

Or rather, you had to be more of a hypocrite before, had to tell the children many more lies—because the lies had had time to mature, and to permeate the syllabus in versions painstakingly elaborated by experts on teaching technique and by school inspectors. In every lesson, whether it was pertinent or not, whether you were studying the anatomy of worms or the use of conjunctions in complex sentences, you were required to take a kick at God (even if you yourself believed in Him); you could not omit singing the praises of our boundless freedom (even if you had lain awake expecting a knock in the night); whether you were reading Turgenev to the class or tracing the course of the Dnieper with your ruler, you had to anathematize the poverty-stricken past and hymn our present plenty (though long before the war you and the children had watched whole villages dying of hunger, and in the towns a child's ration had been 300 grams).

None of this was considered a sin against the truth, against the soul of the child, or against the Holy Ghost.

Whereas now, under the temporary and still unsettled occupation regime, far fewer lies had to be told—but they stood the old ones on their heads, that was the trouble! So it was that the voice of the Fatherland, and the pencil of the underground Party Com-

mittee, forbade you to teach children their native language, geography, arithmetic, and science. Twenty years of *katorga* for work of that sort!

Fellow countrymen, nod your heads in agreement! There they go, guards with dogs alongside, marching to the barracks with their night pails. Stone them—they taught your children.

But my fellow countrymen (particularly former members of specially privileged government departments, retired on pension at forty-five) advance on me with raised fists: Who is it that I am defending? Those who served the Germans as burgomasters? As village headmen? As Polizei? As interpreters? All kinds of filth and scum?

Well, let us go a little deeper. We have done far too much damage by looking at people as entries in a table. Whether we like it or not, the future will force us to reflect on the reasons for their behavior.

When they started playing and singing "Let Noble Rage"—what spine did not tingle? Our natural patriotism, long banned, howled down, under fire, anathematized, was suddenly permitted, encouraged, praised as *sacred*—what Russian heart did not leap up, swell with grateful longing for unity. How could we, with our natural magnanimity, help forgiving in spite of everything the native butchers as the foreign butchers drew near? Later, the need to drown half-conscious misgivings about our impulsive generosity made us all the more unanimous and violent in cursing the traitors—people plainly worse than ourselves, people incapable of forgiveness.

Russia has stood for eleven centuries, known many foes, waged many wars. But—have there been many traitors in Russia? Did traitors ever leave the country in *crowds?* I think not. I do not think that even their foes ever accused the Russians of being traitors, turncoats, renegades, though they lived under a regime inimical to ordinary working people.

Then came the most righteous war in our history, to a country with a supremely just social order—and tens and hundreds of thousands of our people stood revealed as traitors.

Where did they all come from? And why?

Perhaps the unextinguished embers of the Civil War had flared up again? Perhaps these were Whites who had not escaped extermination? No! I have mentioned before that many White émigrés (including the thrice-accursed Denikin) took sides with the Soviet

Union and against Hitler. They had freedom of choice—and that is what they chose.[5]

These tens and hundreds of thousands—Polizei and executioners, headmen and interpreters—were all ordinary Soviet citizens. And there were many young people among them, who had grown up since the Revolution.

What made them do it? . . . What sort of people were they?

For the most part, people who had fallen, themselves and their families, under the caterpillar tracks of the twenties and thirties. People who had lost parents, relatives, loved ones in the turbid streams of our sewage system. Or who themselves had time and again sunk and struggled to the surface in camps and places of banishment. People who knew well enough what it was to stand with feet numb and frostbitten in the queue at the parcels window. People who in those cruel decades had found themselves severed, brutally cut off from the most precious thing on earth, the land itself—though it had been promised to them, incidentally, by the great Decree of 1917, and though they had been called upon to shed their blood for it in the Civil War. (Quite another matter are the country residences bought and bequeathed by Soviet officers, the fenced-in manorial domains outside Moscow: that's ours, so it's all right.) Then some people had been seized for snipping ears of wheat or rye. And some deprived of the right to live where they wished. Or the right to follow a long-practiced and well-loved trade (no one now remembers how fanatically we persecuted craftsmen).

All such people are spoken of nowadays (especially by professional agitators and the proletarian vigilantes of *Oktyabr**) with a contemptuous compression of the lips: "people with a grudge against the Soviet state," "formerly repressed persons," "sons of the former kulak class," "people secretly harboring black resentment of the Soviet power."

One says it—and another nods his head. As though it explained anything. As though the people's state had the right to offend its citizens. As though this were the essential defect, the root of the evil: "people with a grudge," "secretly resentful". . .

And no one cries out: How can you! Damn your insolence! Do

5. They had not sipped with us the bitter cup of the thirties, and from a distance, from Europe, it was easy for them to be enthralled by the great patriotic feat of the Russian people, and overlook the twelve years of internal genocide.

you or do you not hold that being determines consciousness? Or only when it suits you? And when it doesn't suit you does it cease to be true?

Then again, some of us are very good at saying—and a shadow flits over our faces—"Well, yes, certain errors were committed." Always the same disingenuously innocent, impersonal form: "were committed"—only nobody knows by whom. You might almost think that it was by ordinary workers, by men who shift heavy loads, by collective farmers. Nobody has the courage to say: "The Party committed them! Our irremovable and irresponsible leaders committed them!" Yet by whom, except those who had power, could such errors be "committed"? Lump all the blame on Stalin? Have you no sense of humor? If Stalin committed all these errors—where were you at the time, you ruling millions?

In any case, even these mistakes have faded in our eyes to a dim, shapeless blur, and they are no longer regarded as the result of stupidity, fanaticism, and malice; they are all subsumed in the only mistake acknowledged—that Communists jailed Communists. If 15 to 17 million peasants were ruined, sent off for destruction, scattered about the country without the right to remember their parents or mention them by name—that was apparently no mistake. And all the tributary streams of the sewage system surveyed at the beginning of this book were also, it seems, no mistake. That they were utterly unprepared for war with Hitler, emptily vainglorious, that they retreated shamefully, changing their slogans as they ran, that only Ivan fighting for Holy Russia halted the Germans on the Volga—all this turns out to be not a silly blunder, but possibly Stalin's greatest achievement.

In the space of two months we abandoned very nearly one-third of our population to the enemy—including all those incompletely destroyed families; including camps with several thousand inmates, who scattered as soon as their guards ran for it; including prisons in the Ukraine and the Baltic States, where smoke still hung in the air after the mass shooting of political prisoners.

As long as we were strong, we smothered these unfortunates, hounded them, denied them work, drove them from their homes, hurried them into their graves. When our weakness was revealed, we immediately demanded that they should forget all the harm done them, forget the parents and children who had died of hunger in the tundra, forget the executions, forget how we ruined them, forget our ingratitude to them, forget interrogation and

torture at the hands of the NKVD, forget the starvation camps—and immediately join the partisans, go underground to defend the Homeland, with no thought for their lives. (There was no need for *us* to change! And no one held out the hope that when we came back we should treat them any differently, no longer hounding, harassing, jailing, and shooting them.)

Given this state of affairs, should we be surprised that too many people welcomed the arrival of the Germans? Or surprised that there were so few who did? (The Germans could sometimes be the instrument of justice: remember what happened to people who had served in Soviet times as informers, the shooting of the deacon at the Naberezhno-Nikolskaya Church in Kiev, for instance—and there were scores of similar cases.)

And the believers? For twenty years on end, religious belief was persecuted and churches closed down. The Germans came—and churches began to open their doors. (Our masters lacked the nerve to shut them again immediately after the German withdrawal.) In Rostov-on-the-Don, for instance, the ceremonial opening of the churches was an occasion for mass rejoicing and great crowds gathered. Were they nonetheless supposed to curse the Germans for this?

In Rostov again, in the first days of the war, Aleksandr Petrovich M——, an engineer, was arrested and died in a cell under interrogation. For several anxious months his wife expected to be arrested herself. Only when the Germans came could she go to bed with a quiet mind. "Now at least I can get some sleep!" Should she instead have prayed for the return of her tormentors?

In May, 1943, while the Germans were in Vinnitsa, men digging in an orchard on Podlesnaya Street (which the city soviet had surrounded with a high fence early in 1939 and declared a "restricted area under the People's Commissariat of Defense") found themselves uncovering graves which had previously escaped notice because they were overgrown with luxuriant grass. They found thirty-nine mass graves, 3.5 meters deep, 3 meters wide, 4 meters long. In each grave they found first a layer of outer garments belonging to the deceased, then bodies laid alternately head first or feet first. The hands of all of them were tied with rope, and they had all been shot by small-bore pistols in the back of the head. They had evidently been executed in prison and carted out for burial by night. Documents which had not decayed made it possible to identify people who had been sentenced to "20 years without

the right to correspond" in 1938. Plate No. 1 is one picture of the excavation site: inhabitants of Vinnitsa have come to view the bodies or identify their relatives. There was more to come. In June they began digging near the Orthodox cemetery, outside the Pirogov Hospital, and discovered another forty-two graves. Next the Gorky Park of Culture and Rest—where, under the swings and carrousel, the "funhouse," the games area, and the dance floor, fourteen more mass graves were found. Altogether, 9,439 corpses in ninety-five graves. This was in Vinnitsa alone, and the discoveries were accidental. How many lie successfully hidden in other towns? After viewing these corpses, were the population supposed to rush off and join the partisans?

Perhaps in fairness we should at least admit that if you and I suffer when we and all we hold dear are trodden underfoot, those *we* tread on feel no less pain. Perhaps in fairness we should at last admit that those whom we seek to destroy have a right to hate us. Or have they no such right? Are they supposed to die gratefully?

We attribute deep-seated if not indeed congenital malice to these Polizei, these burgomasters—but we ourselves planted their malice in them, they were "waste products" of our making. How does Krylenko's dictum go? "In our eyes every crime is the product of a particular social system!"[6] In this case—of your system, comrades! Don't forget your own doctrine!

Let us not forget either that among those of our fellow countrymen who took up the sword against us or attacked us in words, some were completely disinterested. No property had been taken from them (they had had none to begin with), they had never been imprisoned in the camps (nor yet had any of their kin), but they had long ago been sickened by our whole system: its contempt for the fate of the individual; the persecution of people for their beliefs; that cynical song "There's no land where men can breathe so freely"; the kowtowing of the devout to the Leader; the nervous twitching of pencils as everyone hurries to sign up for the state loan; the obligatory applause rising to an ovation! Cannot we realize that these perfectly normal people could not breathe our fetid air? (Father Fyodor Florya's accusers asked him how he had dared talk about Stalin's foul deeds when the Rumanians were on the spot. "How could I say anything different about you?" he answered. "I only told them what I knew. I only told them what

6. Krylenko, *Za Pyat Let (1918–1922)*, p. 337.

had happened." What we ask is something different: lie, go against your conscience, perish—just so long as it helps us! But this, unless I'm mistaken, is hardly materialism.)

In September, 1941, before I went into the army, my wife and I, young schoolteachers who had just started work in the settlement of Morozovsk (captured by the Germans in the following year), happened to rent lodgings on the same little yard as a childless couple, the Bronevitskys. Nikolai Gerasimovich Bronevitsky, a sixty-year-old engineer, was an intellectual of Chekhovian appearance, very likable, quiet, and clever. When I try now to recall his long face I imagine him with pince-nez, though he may not have worn them at all. His wife was even quieter and gentler than he was—a faded woman with flaxen hair close to her head, twenty-five years younger than her husband, but not at all young in her behavior. We were fond of them, and they probably liked us, particularly in contrast to our grasping landlord and his greedy family.

In the evenings the four of us would sit on the steps of the porch. They were quiet, warm, moonlit evenings, not as yet rent by the rumble of planes and by exploding bombs, but anxiety about the German advance was stealing over us like the invisible clouds stealing over the milky sky to smother the small and defenseless moon. Every day new trainloads of refugees stopped at the station, on their way to Stalingrad. Refugees filled the marketplace of the settlement with rumors, terrors, 100-ruble notes that seemed to burn holes in their pockets, then they continued their journey. They named towns which had surrendered, about which the Information Bureau, afraid to tell people the truth, would keep silent for a long time to come. (Bronevitsky spoke of these towns not as having "surrendered" but as having been "taken.")

We were sitting on the steps and talking. We younger people were full of ourselves, of anxiety for the future, but we really had nothing more intelligent to say about it than what was written in the newspapers. We were at ease with the Bronevitskys: we said whatever we thought without noticing the discrepancies between our way of looking at things and theirs.

For their part, they probably saw in us two surprising examples of naïvely enthusiastic youth. We had just lived through the thirties—and we might as well not have been alive in that decade at all. They asked what we remembered best about 1938 and 1939. What do you think we said? The university library, examinations,

the fun we had on sporting trips, dances, amateur concerts, and of course love affairs—we were at the age for love. But hadn't any of our professors been put away at that time? Yes, we supposed that two or three of them had been. Their places were taken by senior lecturers. What about students—had any of them gone inside? We remembered that some senior students had indeed been jailed. And what did you make of it? Nothing; we carried on dancing. And no one near to you was—er—touched? No; no one.

It is a terrible thing, and I want to recall it with absolute precision. It is all the more terrible because I was not one of the young sporting and dancing set, nor one of those obsessive people buried in books and formulae. I was keenly interested in politics from the age of ten; even as a callow adolescent I did not believe Vyshinsky and was staggered by the fraudulence of the famous trials—but nothing led me to draw the line connecting those minute Moscow trials (which seemed so tremendous at the time) with the huge crushing wheel rolling through the land (the number of its victims somehow escaped notice). I had spent my childhood in queues—for bread, for milk, for meal (meat was a thing unknown at that time)—but I could not make the connection between the lack of bread and the ruin of the countryside, or understand *why* it had happened. We were provided with another formula: "temporary difficulties." Every night, in the large town where we lived, hour after hour after hour people were being hauled off to jail—but I did not walk the streets at night. And in the daytime the families of those arrested hung out no black flags, nor did my classmates say a word about their fathers being taken away.

According to the newspapers there wasn't a cloud in the sky.

And young men are so eager to believe that all is well.

I understand now how dangerous it was for the Bronevitskys to tell us anything. But he gave us just a peep into his past, this old engineer who had got in the way of one of the OGPU's* cruelest blows. He had lost his health in prison, been pulled in a time or two, got to know quite a few camps, but he talked with blazing passion only about Dzhezkazgan in its early days—about the water poisoned by copper; about the poisoned air; about the murders; about the futility of complaints to Moscow. The very word Dzhez-kaz-gan made your flesh creep—like steel wool rubbed on the skin, or like the tales of its pitiless ways. (And yet . . . did this Dzhezkazgan have the slightest effect on our way of looking at the world? Of course not. It was not very near. It was

not happening to us. You have to experience it for yourself. It is better not to think about it. Better to forget.)

There in Dzhezkazgan, when Bronevitsky was allowed outside the guarded area, his present wife, then a mere girl, had come to him, and they had been married with the barbed wire for witness. When war broke out they were, by some miracle, at liberty in Morozovsk, with black marks in their passports, of course. He was working in some wretched construction agency, and she was a bookkeeper.

I went off to the army, and my wife left Morozovsk. The settlement came under German occupation. Then it was liberated. And one day my wife wrote to me at the front: "Can you imagine it —they say that Bronevitsky acted as burgomaster for the Germans while they were in Morozovsk. How disgusting!" I was just as shocked. "Filthy thing to do!" I thought.

But a few more years went by. Lying on the sleeping platform in some dark jail and turning things over in my mind, I remembered Bronevitsky. And I was no longer so schoolboyishly self-righteous. They had unjustly taken his job from him, given him work that was beneath him, locked him up, tortured him, beaten him, starved him, spat in his face—what was he supposed to do? He was supposed to believe that all this was the price of progress, and that his own life, physical and spiritual, the lives of those dear to him, the anguished lives of our whole people, were of no significance.

Through the smoke screen of the personality cult, thin and ineffectual as it is, through the intervening layers of time in which we have changed, each of which has its own sharp angle of refraction, we see neither ourselves nor the thirties in true perspective and true shape. Idolization of Stalin, boundless and unquestioning faith, were not characteristic of the whole people, but only of the Party and the Komsomol; of urban youth in schools and universities; of ersatz intellectuals (a surrogate for those who had been destroyed or dispersed); and to some extent of the urban petty bourgeoisie (the working class)[7]—their loudspeakers were never switched off from the morning chimes of the Spassky belfry to the playing of the Internationale at midnight, and for them the voice of the radio announcer Levitan* became the voice of conscience.

7. It was in the thirties that the working class merged completely with the petty bourgeoisie, and became its main constituent part.

(I say "to some extent" because labor legislation like the "twenty minutes late" decree and the tying of the workers to their factories enlisted no supporters.) All the same, there was an urban minority, and not such a small one, numbering at the least several millions, who pulled out the radio plug in disgust whenever they dared. On every page of every newspaper they saw merely a spreading stain of lies, and polling day for these millions was a day of suffering and humiliation. For this minority the dictatorship existing in our country was neither proletarian nor national in character, nor yet (for those who recalled the original sense of the word) Soviet, but the dictatorship of another minority, a usurping minority, which was very far from being a spiritual elite.

Mankind is almost incapable of dispassionate, unemotional thinking. In something which he has recognized as evil man can seldom force himself to see also what is good. Not everything in our lives was foul, not every word in the papers was false, but the minority, downtrodden, bullied, beset by stool pigeons, saw life in our country as an abomination from top to bottom, saw every page in the newspapers as one long lie. Let us recall that in those days there were no Western broadcasts in Russian (and the number of private radio sets was inconsiderable), so that a citizen could obtain information *only* from our newspapers and the official radio, in which Bronevitsky and his like expected from experience to find only cowardly suppression of facts or a vexatious tangle of lies. Everything that was written about other countries, about the inevitable collapse of the West in 1930, about the treachery of Western socialists, about the passionate hostility of all Spain to Franco (or in 1942 about Nehru's treasonable aspiration to freedom in India—which of course weakened our ally the British Empire), all this proved to be nothing but lies. The maddeningly monotonous, hate-filled propaganda conducted on the principle that "he who is not for us is against us" had never drawn distinctions between the attitudes of Mariya Spiridonova and Nicholas II, those of Léon Blum and Hitler, those of the British Parliament and the German Reichstag. So when Bronevitsky read apparently fantastic stories about bonfires of books in German squares, and the resurrection of some sort of ancient Teutonic savagery (we must not forget that Tsarist propaganda during the First World War had also told a few fibs about Teuton savagery), how could he be expected to distinguish them from all the rest, single them out as true, recognize in German Nazism (reviled in almost the

same—inordinate—terms as Poincaré, Pilsudski, and the British conservatives earlier) a quadruped as dangerous as that which in reality and in the flesh had for a quarter of a century past been squeezing the life out of him, poisoning his existence, clawing him till he bled, and with him the whole Archipelago, the Russian town, the Russian village? Then the newspapers were forever changing their minds about the Hitlerites: at first it was friendly encounters between nice sentries in nasty Poland, and the newspapers were awash with sympathy for the valiant warriors standing up to French and English bankers, and Hitler's speeches, verbatim, filled a page of *Pravda* at a time; then one morning (the second morning of the war) an explosion of headlines—all Europe was piteously groaning under the Nazi heel. This only confirmed that newspaper lies changed as the wind shifted, and could do nothing to persuade Bronevitsky that other butchers on this earth were a match for ours, about whom he knew the truth. If someone had tried to convince him by putting BBC bulletins before him daily, he might at most have been made to believe that Hitler was a secondary danger to Russia but certainly not, while Stalin lived, the greatest. As it was, the BBC provided no bulletins; the Soviet Information Bureau from the day it was born commanded no more credit than Tass; the rumors carried by evacuees were not firsthand information (from Germany or from the occupied areas no living witness had yet appeared). What he did know at first hand was the camp at Dzhezkazgan, and 1937, and the famine of 1932, and "dekulakization," and the destruction of the churches. So that as the German army approached, Bronevitsky (and tens of thousands of lonely individuals like him) felt that their hour was drawing near—the hour which they had ceased to hope for twenty years ago, which is given to a man only once, then lost forever, since our lives are so short measured against the slow pace of historical change—the hour in which he can repudiate what has befallen, what has been visited upon, flogged, and trampled into his people, serve in some way still obscure his agonized country, help to revive some sort of public life in Russia. Yes, Bronevitsky had remembered everything and forgiven nothing. He could never accept as his own a regime which had thrashed Russia unmercifully, brought it to collectivized beggary, to moral degeneracy, and now to a stunning military defeat. He choked with anger as he looked at naïve creatures like me, like us, for it was beyond his power to convert us. He was waiting for *someone,* anyone, to take

power in place of Stalin! (The well-known psychological phenomenon of reaction to extremes: anything rather than the nauseous reality we know! Can we imagine, anywhere in the world, anyone worse than our rulers? Incidentally, this was in the Don region—where half the population were just as eagerly awaiting the Germans.) So then Bronevitsky, who had been an apolitical being all his life, resolved in his seventh decade to make a political move.

He consented to head the Morozovsk municipal authority. . . .

There, I think, he must quickly have seen what a silly situation he had landed himself in, seen that for the new arrivals Russia was even more insignificant and detestable than for those who had gone away—that the vampire needed only Russia's vital fluids, and that the body could wither and perish. The new burgomaster's task was to be in charge not of public-spirited Russians, but of auxiliaries to the German police. But he was fastened to the axle and now, like it or not, he could only spin. Having freed himself from one lot of butchers, he must help another. The patriotic idea, which he had thought of as diametrically opposed to the Soviet idea, he suddenly saw fused with it: in some incomprehensible fashion patriotism had slipped away like water through a sieve from the minority who had preserved it, and passed to the majority; it was forgotten how people had been shot for patriotism, how it had been ridiculed, and now it was the main stem of someone else's tree.

He, and others like him, must have felt trapped and terrified: the crack had narrowed and the only way out led to death or to *katorga.*

Of course, they were not all Bronevitskys. Of course, many birds of prey greedy for power and blood had flocked to that brief feast in time of plague. But their like will flock wherever there are pickings. They were very much at home in the NKVD, too. Such a one was Mamulov, or Antonov at Dudinsk, or Poisui-Shapka—can anyone imagine fouler butchers? (See Volume II.) Yet they lorded it for decades and bled the people dry a hundred times over. We shall shortly meet Warder Tkach—one of those who managed to fit into both contexts.

We have been talking about the towns, but we should not forget the countryside. Liberals nowadays commonly reproach the village with its political obtuseness and conservatism. But before the war the village to a man, or overwhelmingly, was sober, much

more sober than the town: it took no part at all in the deification of Daddy Stalin (and needless to say had no time for world revolution either). The village was, quite simply, sane and remembered clearly how it had been promised land, then robbed of it; how it had lived, eaten, and dressed before and after collectivization; how calves, ewes, and even hens had been taken away from the peasant's yard; how churches had been desecrated and defiled. Even in 1941 the radio's nasal bray was not yet heard in peasant huts, and not every village had even one person able to read the newspapers, so that to the Russian countryside all those Chang Tso-lins, MacDonalds, and Hitlers were indistinguishably strange and meaningless lay figures.

In a village in Ryazan Province on July 3, 1941, peasants gathered near the smithy were listening to Stalin's speech relayed by a loudspeaker. The man of iron, hitherto unmoved by the tears of Russian peasants, was now a bewildered old gaffer almost in tears himself, and as soon as he blurted out his humbugging "Brothers and Sisters," one of the peasants answered the black paper mouthpiece. "This is what you want, you bastard," and he made in the direction of the loudspeaker a rude gesture much favored by Russians: one hand grips the opposite elbow, and the forearm rises and falls in a pumping motion.

The peasants all roared with laughter.

If we questioned eyewitnesses in every village, we should learn of ten thousand such incidents, some still more pungent.

Such was the mood of the Russian village at the beginning of the war—the mood, then, of the reservists drinking the last half-liter and dancing in the dust with their kinsmen while they waited at some wayside halt for a train. On top of all this came a defeat without precedent in Russian memories, as vast rural areas stretching to the outskirts of both capitals and to the Volga, as many millions of peasants, slipped from under kolkhoz rule, and —why go on lying and prettifying history?—it turned out that the republics only wanted independence, the village only wanted freedom from the kolkhoz! The workers freedom from feudal decrees! If the newcomers had not been so hopelessly arrogant and stupid, if they had not preserved the bureaucratic kolkhoz administration for Great Germany's convenience, if they had not conceived the obscene idea of turning Russia into a colony, the patriotic cause would not have devolved on those who had always tried to smother it, and we should hardly have been called upon to cele-

brate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Russian Communism. (Somebody, someday, will have to tell us how the peasants in occupied areas never joined the partisan movement of their own free will, and how to begin with they took up arms against the partisans rather than hand over their grain and cattle.)

Do you remember the great exodus from the Northern Caucasus in January, 1943—and can you think of any analogy in world history? A civilian population, and a peasant population at that, leaving with a defeated enemy, with an alien army, rather than stay behind with the victors, their fellow countrymen—the wagon trains rolling as far as the eye could see through the fierce, icy January winds!

Here, too, lie the social roots of those hundreds of thousands of volunteers who, monster though Hitler was, were desperate enough to don enemy uniform. The time has come for us to give our views on the Vlasov movement* once again. In the first part of this book the reader was not yet prepared for the whole truth (nor am I in possession of the whole truth; special studies will be written on the subject, which is for me of secondary importance). There at the beginning, before the reader had traveled the highroads and byroads of the camp world with me, he was merely alerted, invited to think. Now, after all those prison transports, transit jails, lumber gangs, and camp middens, perhaps the reader will be a little more open to persuasion. In Part I, I spoke of those Vlasovites who took up arms in desperation, because they were starving in camps, because their position seemed hopeless. (Yet even here there is room for reflection: the Germans began by using Russian prisoners of war only for nonmilitary tasks in the rear, in support of their own troops, and this, you might think, was the best solution for those who only wanted to save their skins—so why did they take up arms and confront the Red Army head on?) But now, since further postponement is impossible, should I not also talk about those who even before 1941 had only one dream —to take up arms and blaze away at those Red commissars, Chekists,* and collectivizers? Remember Lenin's words: "An oppressed class which did not aspire to possess arms and learn how to handle them would deserve only to be treated as slaves" (Fourth Edition, Volume 23, page 85). There is, then, reason to be proud if the Soviet-German war showed that we are not such slaves as all those studies by liberal historians contemptuously make us out to be. There was nothing slavish about those who

reached for their sabers to cut off Daddy Stalin's head (nor about those on the other side, who straightened their backs for the first time when they put on Red Army greatcoats—in a strange brief interval of freedom which no student of society could have foreseen).

These people, who had experienced on their own hides twenty-four years of Communist happiness, knew by 1941 what as yet no one else in the world knew: that nowhere on the planet, nowhere in history, was there a regime more vicious, more bloodthirsty, and at the same time more cunning and ingenious than the Bolshevik, the self-styled Soviet regime. That no other regime on earth could compare with it either in the number of those it had done to death, in hardiness, in the range of its ambitions, in its thoroughgoing and unmitigated totalitarianism—no, not even the regime of its pupil Hitler, which at that time blinded Western eyes to all else. Came the time when weapons were put in the hands of these people, should they have curbed their passions, allowed Bolshevism to outlive itself, steeled themselves to cruel oppression again—and only then begun the struggle with it (a struggle which has still hardly started anywhere in the world)? No, the natural thing was to copy the methods of Bolshevism itself: it had eaten into the body of a Russia sapped by the First World War, and it must be defeated at a similar moment in the Second.

Our unwillingness to fight had already shown itself in the Soviet-Finnish war of 1939. V. G. Bazhanov, formerly Secretary of the Politburo and Orgburo of the CPSU(b)* and Stalin's close assistant, tried to exploit this mood: to turn captured Red Army men against the Soviet lines under the command of Russian émigré officers—not to fight their compatriots but to convert them. The attempt was abruptly terminated by the sudden capitulation of Finland.

When the Soviet-German war began, ten years after the slaughterous collectivization, eight years after the great Ukrainian famine (six million dead, unnoticed by neighboring Europe), four years after the devil's dance of the NKVD, one year after the workers were shackled to the new labor laws—and all this when there were 15 million in camps about the country, and while the older generation all clearly remembered what life was like before the Revolution—the natural impulse of the people was to take a deep breath and liberate itself, its natural feeling one of loathing for its rulers. "Caught us unawares"; "numerical superiority in

aircraft and tanks" (in fact, all-round numerical superiority was enjoyed by the Red Army)—it was not this that enabled the enemy to close so easily those disastrous salients, taking 300,000 armed men at a time (Bialystok, Smolensk), or 650,000 (Bryansk, Kiev); not this that caused whole fronts to cave in, and rolled our armies back farther and faster than anything Russia had seen in all its one thousand years, or, probably, any other country in any other war —not this, but the instant paralysis of a paltry regime whose subjects recoiled from it as from a hanging corpse. (The raikoms and gorkoms* were blown away in five minutes, and Stalin was gasping for breath.) In 1941 this upheaval might have run its full course (by December, 60 million Soviet people out of a population of 150 millions were no longer in Stalin's power). The alarmist note in Stalin's Order No. 0019, July 16, 1941, was justified. "On all [!] fronts there are numerous [!] elements who even run to meet the enemy [!], and throw down their arms at the first contact with him." (In the Bialystok salient in July, 1941, among 340,000 prisoners there were 20,000 deserters.) Stalin thought the situation so desperate that in October, 1941, he sent a telegram to Churchill suggesting that twenty-five to thirty British divisions be landed on Soviet territory. What Communist has ever suffered a more complete moral collapse! This was the mood of the time: on August 22, 1941, the commanding officer of the 436th Light Infantry Regiment, Major Kononov, told his regiment to their faces that he was going over to the Germans, to join the "Liberation Army" for the overthrow of Stalin, and invited all who wished to go with him. Not only did he meet with no opposition—*the whole regiment* followed him! Only three weeks later Kononov had created a regiment of Cossack volunteers behind the enemy lines (he was a Don Cossack himself). When he arrived at the prisoner-of-war camp near Mogilev to enlist volunteers, 4,000 of the 5,000 prisoners there declared their readiness to join him, but he could not take them all. In the same year, half the Soviet prisoners of war in the camp near Tilsit—12,000 men—signed a declaration that the time had come to convert the war into a civil war. We have not forgotten how the whole population of Lokot-Bryansky, before the arrival of the Germans and independently of them, joined in the creation of an autonomous Russian local administration over a large and flourishing province, with eight districts, and more than a million inhabitants. The demands of the Lokot-Bryansky community were quite precise: a Russian national government to be

established, Russians to administer themselves in all the occupied provinces, Russia to be declared independent within its 1938 frontiers, a "Liberation Army" to be formed under Russian command. Or again, a group of young people in Leningrad numbering more than 1,000 (led by the student Rutchenko) went out in the woods near Gatchina to await the Germans and fight against the Stalin regime. (The Germans, however, sent them behind the lines to work as drivers and kitchen orderlies.) The Germans were met with bread and salt in the villages on the Don. The pre-1941 population of the Soviet Union naturally imagined that the coming of a foreign army meant the overthrow of the Communist regime—otherwise it could have no meaning for us at all. People expected a political program which would liberate them from Bolshevism.

From where we were, separated from them by the wilderness of Soviet propaganda, by the dense mass of Hitler's army—how could we readily believe that the Western allies had entered this war not for the sake of freedom in general, but for their own Western European freedom, only against Nazism, intending to take full advantage of the Soviet armies and leave it at that? Was it not more natural for us to believe that our allies were true to the very *principle* of freedom and that they would not abandon us to a worse tyranny? . . . True, these were the same allies for whom Russians had died in the First World War, and who then, too, had abandoned our army in the moment of collapse, hastening back to their comforts. But this was a lesson too cruel for the heart to learn.

Having rightly taught ourselves to disbelieve Soviet propaganda, whatever it said, we naturally did not believe tall stories about the Nazis' wishing to make Russia a colony and ourselves German slaves; who would expect to find such foolishness in twentieth-century heads, unless he had experienced its effects for himself? Even in 1942 the Russian formation in Osintorf attracted more volunteers than a unit still not fully deployed could absorb, while in the Smolensk region and Byelorussia, a volunteer "people's militia" 100,000 strong was formed for purposes of self-defense against the partisans directed from Moscow (the Germans took fright and banned it). As late as spring, 1943, on his two propaganda tours in the Smolensk and Pskov regions, Vlasov was greeted with enthusiasm wherever he went. Even then, the population was still waiting and wondering when we should have our

own independent government and our own army. I have testimony from the Pozherevitsky district of the Pskov oblast about the friendly attitude of the peasant population to the Vlasov unit there—which refrained from looting and brawling, wore the old Russian uniform, helped with the harvest, and was regarded as a Russian organ of authority opposed to kolkhozes. Volunteers from among the civilian population came to sign on (just as they did in Lokot-Bryansky with Voskoboinikov's unit)—and we are bound to wonder what made them do so. It was not as though they were getting out of a POW camp. In fact, the Germans several times forbade Vlasovites to take in reinforcements (let them sign on with the Polizei). As late as March, 1943, prisoners of war in a camp near Kharkov read leaflets about the Vlasov movement (so called) and 730 officers signed an application to join the "Russian Liberation Army"; they had the experience of two years of war behind them, many were heroes of the battle for Stalingrad, their number included divisional commanders and regimental commissars—moreover, the camp was very well fed, and it was not the desperation of hunger that induced them to sign. (The Germans, however, behaved with typical stupidity; of the 730 who signed, 722 had still not been released from the camp and given a chance to act when the war ended.) Even in 1943 tens of thousands of refugees from the Soviet provinces trailed along behind the retreating German army—anything was better than remaining under Communism.

I will go so far as to say that our folk would have been worth nothing at all, a nation of abject slaves, if it had gone through that war without brandishing a rifle at Stalin's government even from afar, if it had missed its chance to shake its fist and fling a ripe oath at the *Father of the Peoples.* The Germans had their generals' plot —but what did we have? Our generals were (and remain to this day) nonentities, corrupted by Party ideology and greed, and have not preserved in their own persons the spirit of the nation, as happens in other countries. So that those who raised their hands and struck were almost to a man from the lowest levels of society —the number of former gentry émigrés, former members of the wealthier strata, and intellectuals taking part was microscopically small. If this movement had been allowed to develop unhindered, to flow with the same force as in the first weeks of the war, it would have been like a second Pugachev rising*— resembling the first in the numbers and social level of those swept in its train, in the

weight of popular support, in the part played by the Cossacks, in spirit (its determination to settle accounts with evildoers in high places), in the contrast between its elemental force and the weakness of its leadership. However this may be, it was very much more a movement of the people, the *common people,* than the whole "liberation movement" of the intelligentsia from the beginning of the twentieth century right up to February, 1917, with its pseudo-popular aims and its harvest in October. It was not, however, destined to run its course, but to perish ignominiously, stigmatized as "treason to our holy Motherland"!

We have lost the taste for social analysis of events—because such explanations are juggled around to suit the need of the moment. But what of our friendship pact with Ribbentrop and Hitler? The braggadocio of Molotov and Voroshilov before the war? And then, the staggering incompetence, the unpreparedness, the fumbling (and the craven flight of the government from Moscow), the armies abandoned, half a million at a time, in the salients—was this not betrayal of the Motherland? With more serious consequences? Why do we cherish *these* traitors so tenderly in their apartments on Granovsky Street?

Oh, the length of it! The length of the prisoners' bench with seats for *all* those who tormented and betrayed our people, if we could bring them all, from first to last, to account.

Awkward questions get no answers in our country. They are passed over in silence. Instead, this is the sort of thing they yell at us:

"It's the *principle!* The very principle of the thing! Does any Russian, to achieve his own political ends, however just they appear to him, have the right to lean on the strong right arm of German imperialism?! . . . And that at the moment of war to the death?"

True enough, this is the crucial question: Ought you, for what seem to you noble ends, to avail yourself of the support of German imperialists at war with Russia?

Today, everyone will join in a unanimous cry of "No!"

What, then, of the sealed German carriage from Switzerland to Sweden, calling on the way (as we have now learned) at Berlin? The whole Russian press, from the Mensheviks to the Cadets,* also cried "No!" but the Bolsheviks explained that it was permissible, that it was indeed ridiculous to reproach them with it. But this is not the only train journey worth mentioning. How many rail-

road cars did the Bolsheviks rush out of Russia in summer, 1918, some carrying foodstuffs, others gold—all of them into Wilhelm's capacious maw! Convert the war into a civil war! This was Lenin's proposal before the Vlasovites thought of it.

—Yes, but his aims! Remember what his aims were!

Well, what were they? And what has become of them, those aims?

—Yes, but really—that was Wilhelm! The Kaiser! The little Emperor! A bit different from Hitler! And anyway, was there really any government in Russia at the time? The Provisional Government doesn't count. . . .

Well, there was a time when, inflamed with martial ardor, we never mentioned the Kaiser in print without the words "ferocious" or "bloodthirsty," and incautiously accused the Kaiser's soldiers of smashing the heads of babes against stones. But let's agree—the Kaiser was different from Hitler. The Provisional Government, though, was also different: it had no Cheka, shot no one in the back of the head, imprisoned no one in camps, herded no one into collective farms, poisoned no one's life: the Provisional Government was not Stalin's government.

We must keep things in proportion.

■

It was not that someone took fright as *katorga* killed off one "alphabet" after another, but simply that with the war drawing to an end there was no need for such a savage deterrent: no new Polizei units could be formed, working hands were needed, and in *katorga* people were dying off uselessly. So as early as 1945 huts in *katorga* ceased to be prison cells, doors were opened to let in the daylight, slop buckets were carried out to the latrines, prisoners were allowed to make their own way to the Medical Section and were trotted to the mess hall at the double to keep their spirits up. The thieves who used to filch other prisoners' rations were removed, and mess orderlies appointed from among the politicals themselves. Later on, prisoners were allowed to receive letters, two a year.

The line between *katorga* and the ordinary camps became blurred in the years 1946–1947. Unfastidious managing engineers did not let political distinctions stand in the way of plan fulfillment

and began (in Vorkuta at least) to transfer political offenders with good qualifications to ordinary Camp Divisions, where nothing but the numbers on their backs reminded them of *katorga,* while rank-and-file manual laborers from Corrective Labor Camps were shoved into *katorga* to fill the gaps.

In this way the thoughtless managers might have thwarted Stalin's great idea of resurrecting *katorga*—except that in 1948 a new idea came to him just in time, that of dividing the natives of Gulag into distinct groups, separating the socially acceptable thieves and delinquents from the socially irredeemable 58's.

All this was part of a still greater concept, the Reinforcement of the Home Front (it is obvious from the choice of words that Stalin was preparing for war in the near future). Special Camps[8] were set up with a special regime, slightly milder than that of the *katorga* earlier on, but harsher than that of the ordinary camps.

To distinguish them from other camps, fantastic poetical titles were invented for them instead of ordinary geographical names. Such new creations included *Gorlag** at Norilsk, *Berlag* on the Kolyma, *Minlag* on the Inta, *Rechlag* on the Pechora, *Dubrovlag* at Potma, *Ozerlag* at Taishet, *Steplag, Peschanlag,* and *Luglag* in Kazakhstan, *Kamyshlag* in Kemerovo Province.

Dark rumors crept around the Corrective Labor Camps, that 58's would be sent to Special Extermination Camps. (It did not, of course, enter the heads either of those carrying out the orders or of the victims that any formal additional sentences might be necessary.)

The Registration and Distribution and the Security Operations sections worked furiously. Secret lists were made and driven away somewhere for approval. Long red prisoner-transport trains were moved in, companies of brisk red-tabbed guards* marched up with Tommy guns, dogs, and hammers, and the enemies of the people, as their names were called, meekly obeyed the inexorable summons to leave their cozy huts and begin the long transit.

But not all 58's were summoned. It was only later, comparing notes on their acquaintances, that the prisoners realized which of them had been left behind on Corrective Labor islands with the minor offenders. Among them were those convicted under Article 58, Section 10, with no further charges. This covered simple Anti-

8. Cf. the Special Purpose Camps set up in 1921.

Soviet Agitation, which meant that it was a gratuitous act, without accomplices, and not aimed at anyone in particular. (Though it may seem almost impossible to imagine such agitators, millions of them were on the books, and were left behind on the older islands of Gulag.) Agitators who had formed duets or trios, shown any inclination to listen to each other, to exchange views, or to grumble in chorus, had been burdened with an additional charge under Article 58, Section 11 (on hostile groups) and, as the leaven of anti-Soviet organizations, now went off to Special Camps. So, needless to say, did traitors to the Motherland (58-1a and 1b), bourgeois nationalists and separatists (58-2), agents of the international bourgeoisie (58-4), spies (58-6), subversives (58-7), terrorists (58-8), wreckers (58-9), and economic saboteurs (58-14). This was also the most convenient place to put those prisoners of war, German (in Minlag) or Japanese (in Ozerlag), whom it was intended to detain beyond 1948.

On the other hand, noninformers (58-12) and abettors of the enemy (58-3) in Corrective Labor Camps remained where they were. Whereas prisoners in *katorga* sentenced specifically for aiding and abetting the enemy now went to the Special Camps with all the rest.

The wisdom of the separators was even harder to fathom than appears from this description. Criteria still unexplained left in the Corrective Labor category female traitors serving twenty-five years (Unzhlag) and here and there whole Camp Divisions including nothing but 58's, Vlasovites and ex-Polizei among them. These were not Special Camps, the prisoners wore no numbers, but the regime was severe (Krasnaya Glinka, on the Samara bend of the Volga, the Tuim camp, in the Shirin district of Khakassiya, and the Southern Sakhalin camp were examples). These camps were so harsh that prisoners would have been no worse off in the Special Camps.

So that the Archipelago, once the Great Partition had been carried out, should never again lapse into confusion, it was provided from 1949 onward that every newly naturalized immigrant from the world outside should have written in his prison book, apart from his sentence, a ruling (of the State Security authorities and the Prosecutor's Office in the oblast) as to the type of cage in which this particular bird should always be kept.

Thus, like the seed that dies to produce a plant, Stalin's *katorga* grew into the Special Camp.

The red prisoner-transport trains traveled the length and breadth of the Motherland and the Archipelago carrying the new intake.

At Inta they had the sense simply to drive the herd out of one gate and in through another.

Chekhov complained that we had no "legal definition of *katorga,* or of its purpose."

But that was in the enlightened nineteenth century! In the middle of the twentieth, the cave man's century, we didn't even feel the need to understand and define. Old Man Stalin had decided that it would be so—and that was all the definition necessary.

We just nodded our heads in understanding.

Chapter 2

■

The First Whiff of Revolution

Dismayed by the hopeless length of my sentence, stunned by my first acquaintance with the world of Gulag, I could never have believed at the beginning of my time there that my spirit would recover by degrees from its dejection: that as the years went by, I should ascend, so gradually that I was hardly aware of it myself, to an invisible peak of the Archipelago, as though it were Mauna Loa on Hawaii, and from there gaze serenely over distant islands and even feel the lure of the treacherous shimmering sea between.

The middle part of my sentence I served on a golden isle, where prisoners were given enough to eat and drink and kept warm and clean. In return for all this not much was required of me: just twelve hours a day sitting at a desk and making myself agreeable to the bosses.

But clinging to these good things suddenly became distasteful. I was groping for some new way to make sense of prison life. Looking around me, I realized now how contemptible was the advice of the special-assignment prisoner from Krasnaya Presnya: "At all costs steer clear of general duties."* The price we were paying seemed disproportionately high.

Prison released in me the ability to write, and I now gave all my time to this passion, brazenly neglecting my boring office work. There was something I had come to value more than the butter and sugar they gave me—standing on my own feet again.

Well, they jerked a few of us to our feet—en route to a Special Camp.

They took a long time getting us there—three months. (It could be done more quickly with horses in the nineteenth century.) So

long that this journey became, as it were, a distinct period in my life, and it even seems to me that my character and outlook changed in the course of it.

The journey was bracing, cheerful, full of good omens.

A freshening breeze buffeted our faces—the wind of *katorga* and of freedom. People and incidents pressed in on every hand to assure us that justice was on our side! on our side! on our side! not with our judges and jailers.

The Butyrki, our old home, greeted us with a heartrending female shriek from a window—probably that of a solitary-confinement cell. "Help! Save me! They're killing me! They're killing me!" Then the cries were choked in a warder's hands.

At the Butyrki "station" we were mixed up with raw recruits of the 1949 intake. They all had funny sentences—not the usual *tenners*, but *quarters*. When at each of the numerous roll calls they had to give dates of release, it sounded like a cruel joke: "October, 1974!" "February, 1975!"

No one, surely, could sit out such a sentence. A man must get hold of some pliers and cut the wire.

These twenty-five-year sentences were enough to transform the prisoners' world. The holders of power had bombarded us with all they had. Now it was the prisoners' turn to speak—to speak freely, uninhibitedly, undeterred by threats, the words we had never heard in our lives and which alone could enlighten and unite us.

We were sitting in a Stolypin car* at the Kazan station when we heard from the station loudspeaker that war had broken out in Korea. After penetrating a firm South Korean defense line to a depth of ten kilometers on the very first day, the North Koreans insisted that they had been attacked. Any imbecile who had been at the front understood that the aggressors were those who had advanced on the first day.

This war in Korea excited us even more. In our rebellious mood we longed for the storm. The storm must break, it must, it must, or else we were doomed to a lingering death! . . .

Somewhere past Ryazan the red rays of the rising sun struck with such force through the mole's-eye windows of the prison car that the young guard in the corridor near our grating screwed up his eyes. Our guards might have been worse: they had crammed us into compartments fifteen or so at a time, they fed us on herring, but, to be fair, they also brought us water and let us out morning and evening to relieve ourselves, so that we should have

had no quarrel with them if this lad hadn't unthinkingly, not maliciously, tossed the words "enemies of the people" at us.

That started it! Our compartment and the next pitched into him.

"All right, we're enemies of the people—but why is there no grub on the kolkhoz?"

"You're a country boy yourself by the look of you, but I bet you'll sign on again—I bet you'd sooner be a dog on a chain than go back to the plow."

"If we're enemies of the people, why paint the prison vans different colors? Who are you hiding us from?"

"Listen, kid! I had two like you who never came back from the war—and you call *me* an enemy of the people?"

It was a very long time since words like this had flown through the bars of our cages! We shouted only the plainest of facts, too self-evident to be refuted.

A sergeant serving extra time came to the aid of the flustered youngster, but instead of hauling anyone off to the cooler, or taking names, he tried to help his subordinate to fight back.

Here, too, we saw a faint hint that times were changing—no, this was 1950, too soon to speak of better times; what we saw were signs of the new relationship between prisoners and jailers created by the new long sentences and the new political camps.

Our argument began to take on the character of a genuine debate. The young men took a good look at us, and could no longer bring themselves to call us, or those in the next compartment, enemies of the people. They tried trotting out bits from newspapers and from their elementary politics course, but their ears told them before their minds could that these set phrases rang false.

"Look for yourselves, lads! Look out the window," was the answer they got from us. "Look what you've brought Russia down to!"

Beyond the windows stretched a beggarly land of rotted thatch and rickety huts and ragged folk (we were on the Ruzayev line, by which foreigners never travel). If the Golden Horde had seen it so befouled, they would not have bothered to conquer it.

On the quiet station at Torbeyevo an old man walked along the platform in bast shoes. An old peasant woman stopped opposite the lowered window of our car and stood rooted to the spot for a long time, staring through the outer and inner bars at us prison-

ers tightly packed together on the top bed shelf. She stared at us with that look on her face which our people have kept for "unfortunates" throughout the ages. A few tears trickled down her cheeks. She stood there, work-coarsened and shabby, and she looked at us as though a son of hers lay among us. "You mustn't look in there, mamma," the guard told her, but not roughly. She didn't even turn her head. At her side stood a little girl of ten with white ribbons in her plaits. She looked at us very seriously, with a sadness strange in one of her years, her little eyes wide and unblinking. She looked at us so hard that she must have imprinted us on her memory forever. As the train eased forward, the old woman raised her blackened fingers and devoutly, unhurriedly made the sign of the cross over us.

Then at another station some girl in a spotted frock, anything but shy or timid, came right up to our window and started boldly asking us what we were in for and for how long. "Get away," bellowed the guard who was pacing the platform. "Why, what will you do? I'm the same as them! Here's a pack of cigarettes—give it to the lads," and she produced them from her handbag. (We had already realized that the girl had done time. So many of them, now roaming around free, had received their training on the Archipelago!) The deputy guard commander jumped out of the train. "Get away! I'll put you inside!" She stared scornfully at the old sweat's ugly mug. "You go and ——— yourself, you ———" "Give it to 'em, lads," she said to encourage us. And made a dignified departure.

So we rode on, and I don't think the guards felt that they were protecting the people from its enemies. On we went, more and more inflamed with the conviction that we were right, that all Russia was with us, that the time was at hand to abolish this institution.

At the Kuibyshev Transit Prison, where we *sunbathed* (i.e., loafed) for more than a month, more workers came our way. The air was suddenly rent by the sickening, hysterical yells of thieves (they even whine in a loathsome shrill way). "Help! Get us out of here! The Fascists are beating us! Fascists!"

Here was something new! "Fascists" beating thieves? It always used to be the other way around.

But shortly after, there was a reshuffle of prisoners, and we found that no miracles had happened yet. It was only the first swallow—Pavel Boronyuk. His chest was a millstone; his gnarled

hands were ever ready for a friendly clasp or a blow; he was dark in complexion, aquiline, more like a Georgian than a Ukrainian. He had been an officer at the front, had prevailed in a machine-gun duel with three "Messerschmitts," had been recommended for the order of Hero of the Soviet Union and turned down by the Special Section, had been sent to a punitive battalion and returned with a decoration; and now he had a *tenner,* which as times now were, was hardly a "man's sentence."

He had sized up the thieves while he was still on his way from the jail at Novograd-Volynsk and had fought with them before. Now he was sitting in the next cell on the upper bed platform, quietly playing chess. The whole cell were 58's, but the administration had slipped two thieves in among them. On his way to clear his *rightful* sleeping space by the window, a Belomor cigarette dangling carelessly from his lip, Fiksaty said jokingly, "Might have known they'd put me with gangsters again!" The naïve Veliev, who didn't know much about thieves, hastened to reassure him: "No, we're all 58's here. What about you?" "I'm an embezzler, I'm an educated man!" The thieves chased two men away, slung their own sacks onto their "reserved" places, and walked through the cell examining other people's sacks and looking for trouble. The 58's—no, they hadn't changed yet; they put up no resistance. Sixty grown men waited tamely for their turn to be robbed. There is something hypnotically disarming about the impudence of thieves, who never for a moment expect to meet resistance. (Besides, they can always count on the support of authority.) Boronyuk went on pretending to move his chessmen, but by now he was rolling his eyes in fury and wondering how best to take care of them. When one of the thieves stopped in front of him, he swung his dangling foot and booted him in his ugly face, then jumped down, grabbed the stout wooden lid of the sanitary bucket, and brought it down in a stunning blow on the other thief's head. Then he began hitting them alternately with the lid until it fell to pieces, leaving its base, two solid bars joined crosswise, in his hands. The thieves changed their tune to a pathetic whine, but it must be admitted that there was a certain humor in their moans, that they seemed to see the funny side of it. "What do you think you're doing—hitting people *with a cross!*" "Just because you're strong you shouldn't bully others!" Boronyuk kept on hitting them till one of the thieves rushed to the window shouting, "Help! The Fascists are beating us!"

The thieves never forgot it, and threatened Boronyuk many times afterward. *"You smell like a dead man already!* We'll take you with us!" But they never attacked him again.

Soon afterward our cell also clashed with the bitches.* We were out in the yard to stretch our legs, and relieve ourselves while we were at it, when a woman prison officer sent a trusty to chase some of us out of the latrine. His arrogance (to the "politicals") outraged Volodya Gershuni, a high-strung youngish man, recently sentenced. Volodya pulled the trusty up short, and the trusty felled the lad with a blow. Previously the 58's would simply have swallowed this, but now Maxim the Azerbaijani (who had killed the chairman of his kolkhoz) threw a stone at the trusty, while Boronyuk laid one on his jaw. He slashed Boronyuk with his knife (the warders' assistants went around with knives; there was nothing unusual in this), and ran to the warders for protection, with Boronyuk chasing him. They quickly herded us all into the cell, and senior prison officers arrived to discover who was to blame and threaten us with additional sentences for gang fighting (the MVD man's heart always bleeds for his nearest and dearest, his trusties). Boronyuk's blood was up, and he stepped forward of his own accord. "I beat those bastards, and I'll go on beating them as long as I live!" The "godfather"* warned us that we Counter-Revolutionaries couldn't afford to put on airs and that it would be safer for us to hold our tongues. At this up jumped Volodya Gershuni. He was hardly more than a boy, a first-year university student when he was arrested, and not just a namesake but the nephew of that Gershuni who once commanded the SR* terrorist squad. He screamed at the godfather, as shrill as a fighting cock. "Don't dare call us Counter-Revolutionaries! That's all in the past. We're re-vo-lu-tion-aries again now! Against the Soviet state this time!"

How we enjoyed ourselves! This was the day we'd lived for! And the godfather just frowned and scowled and swallowed it all. Nobody was taken off to the lockup, and the prison officers beat an inglorious retreat. Was *this* how life in prison would be from now on? Could we then fight? Turn on our tormentors? Say out loud just what we thought? All that time we had endured it all like idiots! It's fun beating people who weep easily. We wept—so they beat us.

Now, in the legendary new camps to which they were taking us, where men wore number patches as in the Nazi camps, but where

there would at last be only political prisoners, cleansed of the slimy criminal scum, perhaps the new life would begin. Volodya Gershuni, with his dark eyes and his peaked, dead-white face, said hopefully: "Once we get to the camp we shall soon know with whom we belong!" Silly lad! Did he seriously expect to find there a vigorous political life, with parties of many different shades feverishly contending, discussions, programs, underground meetings? "With whom we belong!" As though the choice had been left to us! As though those who drew up the target figures for arrests in each republic, and the bills of lading for camp-transport trains, had not decided it for us.

In our very long cell—once a stable, with two lines of two-tier bed platforms where the two rows of mangers used to stand, with pillars made of crooked tree trunks along the aisle propping up a decrepit roof, with typical stable windows in the long wall, shaped so that the hay could be forked straight into the mangers (and made narrower by "muzzles"*)—in our cell there were 120 men, of all sorts and conditions. More than half of them were from the Baltic States, uneducated people, simple peasants: the second purge was under way in that area, and all who would not voluntarily join collective farms, or who were suspected in advance of reluctance to join, were being imprisoned or deported. Then there were quite a few Western Ukrainians—members of the OUN,[1] together with anyone who had once given them a night's rest or a meal. Then there were prisoners from the Russian Soviet Federation—with fewer new boys among them, most of them "repeaters." And, of course, a certain number of foreigners.

We were all being taken to the same camp complex (we found out from the records clerk that it was the Steplag group). I looked carefully at those with whom fate had brought me together, and tried to see into their minds.

I found the Estonians and Lithuanians particularly congenial. Although I was no better off than they were, they made me feel ashamed, as though I were the one who had put them inside. Unspoiled, hard-working, true to their word, unassuming—what had they done to be ground in the same mill as ourselves? They had harmed no one, lived a quiet, orderly life, and a more moral life than ours—and now they were to blame because we were

1. Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists.

hungry, because they lived cheek by jowl with us and stood in our path to the sea.

"I am ashamed to be Russian!" cried Herzen when we were choking the life out of Poland. I felt doubly ashamed in the presence of these inoffensive and defenseless people.

My attitude to the Latvians was more complicated. There was a fatality in their plight. They had sown the seed themselves.*

And the Ukrainians? We have long ago stopped saying "Ukrainian nationalists"; we speak only of "Banderists," and this has become such a dirty word that no one thinks of inquiring into the reality. (We also call them "bandits," following our established rule that anyone, anywhere, who kills *for us* is a "partisan," whereas those who kill us are always "bandits," beginning with the Tambov peasants* in 1921.)

The reality is that although long ago in the Kiev period we and the Ukrainians constituted a single people, we have since then been torn asunder and our lives, our customs, our languages for centuries past have taken widely different paths. The so-called "re-union" was a very awkward though perhaps in some minds a sincere attempt to restore our former brotherhood. But we have not made good use of the three centuries since. No statesman in Russia ever gave much thought to the problem of binding the Ukrainians and Russians together in kinship, of smoothing out the lumpy seam. (Had the join been neater, the first Ukrainian Committees would not have been formed in spring, 1917, nor the Rada later on.)

The Bolsheviks before they came to power found the problem uncomplicated. In *Pravda* for June 7, 1917, Lenin wrote as follows: "We regard the Ukraine and other regions not inhabited by Great Russians as territories annexed by the Tsar and the capitalists." He wrote this when the Central Rada was already in existence. Then on November 2, 1917, the "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia" was adopted. Was it just meant as a joke? Was it just a trick when they declared that the peoples of Russia did indeed have the right of self-determination, up to and including secession? Six months later the Soviet government *requested* the good offices of the Kaiser's Germany in helping Soviet Russia to conclude peace and define its boundaries with the Ukraine, and Lenin signed a treaty to this effect with Hetman Skoropadsky on June 14, 1918. By doing so he showed himself fully reconciled to the

detachment of the Ukraine—even if it became a monarchy as a result!

But strangely enough, as soon as the Germans were defeated by the Entente (which could not affect in the least the principles governing our relations with the Ukraine), as soon as the Hetman had fallen, together with his patrons, as soon as we proved stronger than Petlyura (there's another word of abuse, "Petlyurovite": but these were merely Ukrainian townsfolk and peasants, who wanted to order their lives without our interference), we immediately crossed the border which we had recognized and imposed our rule on our blood brothers. True, for fifteen to twenty years afterward we made great play with the Ukrainian language, pushed it perhaps too hard, and impressed it on our brothers that they were completely independent and could break away whenever they pleased. Yet when they tried to do so at the end of the war we denounced them as "Banderists," and started hunting them down, torturing them, executing them, or dispatching them to the camps. (But "Banderists," like "Petlyurovites," are just Ukrainians who do not want to be ruled by others; once they discovered that Hitler would not bring them the freedom they had been promised, they fought against the Germans, as well as ourselves, throughout the war, but we kept quiet about this, since like the Warsaw rising of 1944 it shows us in an unfavorable light.)

Why are we so exasperated by Ukrainian nationalism, by the desire of our brothers to speak, educate their children, and write their shop signs in their own language? Even Mikhail Bulgakov (in *The White Guard*) let himself be misled on this subject. Given that we have not succeeded in fusing completely; that we are still different in some respects (and it is sufficient that *they*, the smaller nation, feel the difference); that however sad it may be, we have missed chance after chance, especially in the thirties and forties; that the problem became most acute not under the Tsar, but after the Tsar—why does their desire to secede annoy us so much? Can't we part with the Odessa beaches? Or the fruit of Circassia?

For me this is a painful subject. Russia and the Ukraine are united in my blood, my heart, my thoughts. But from friendly contact with Ukrainians in the camps over a long period I have learned how sore they feel. Our generation cannot avoid paying for the mistakes of generations before it.

Nothing is easier than stamping your foot and shouting: "That's mine!" It is immeasurably harder to proclaim: "You may live as

you please." We cannot, in the latter end of the twentieth century, live in the imaginary world in which our last, not very bright Emperor came to grief. Surprising though it may be, the prophecy of our Vanguard Doctrine* that nationalism would fade has not come true. In the age of the atom and of cybernetics, it has for some reason blossomed afresh. Like it or not, the time is at hand when we must pay out on all our promissory notes guaranteeing self-determination and independence—pay up of our own accord, and not wait to be burned at the stake, drowned in rivers, or beheaded. We must prove our greatness as a nation not by the vastness of our territory, not by the number of peoples under our tutelage, but by the grandeur of our actions. And by the depth of our tilth in the lands that remain when those who do not wish to live with us are gone.

The Ukraine will be an extremely painful problem. But we must realize that the feelings of the whole people are now at white heat. Since the two peoples have not succeeded over the centuries in living harmoniously, it is up to us to show sense. We must leave the decision to the Ukrainians themselves—let federalists and separatists try their persuasions. Not to give way would be foolhardy and cruel. And the gentler, the more tolerant, the more careful to explain ourselves we are now, the more hope there will be of restoring unity in the future.

Let them live their own lives, let them see how it works. They will soon find that not all problems are solved by secession.[2]

For some reason the cell in the converted stables was our home for a long time, and it looked as though they would never send us on to Steplag. Not that we were in any hurry; we enjoyed life where we were, and the next place could only be worse.

We were not left without news—they brought us daily a sort of half-sized newspaper. I sometimes had the task of reading it aloud to the whole cell, and I read it with expression, for there were things there which demanded it.

The tenth anniversary of the "liberation" of Estonia, Latvia,

2. The fact that the ratio between those who consider themselves Russian and those who consider themselves Ukrainian varies from province to province of the Ukraine will cause many complications. A plebiscite in each province, and afterward a helpful and considerate attitude to those who wish to move, may be necessary. Not all of the Ukraine in its present official Soviet borders is really Ukrainian. Some of the left-bank provinces undoubtedly feel drawn to Russia.

and Lithuania came around just at this time. Some of those who understood Russian translated for the rest (I paused for them to do so), and what can only be called a howl went up from the bed platforms as they heard about the freedom and prosperity introduced into their countries for the first time in history. Each of these Balts (and a good third of all those in the transit prison were Balts) had left behind a ruined home, and was lucky if his family was still there and not on its way to Siberia with another batch of prisoners.

But what of course most excited the transit prison were the reports from Korea. Stalin's blitzkrieg had miscarried. The United Nations volunteers had by now been assembled. We saw in Korea the precursor, the Spain, of the Third World War. (And Stalin probably intended it as a rehearsal.) Those U.N. soldiers were a special inspiration to us. What a flag to fight under! Whom would it not unite? Here was a prototype of the united mankind of the future!

We were wretched, and we could not rise above our wretchedness. Should this have been our dream—to perish so that those who looked unmoved on our destruction might survive? We could not accept it. No, we longed for the storm!

Some will be surprised. —What a desperate, what a cynical state of mind. Had you no thought for the hardships war would bring to those outside? —Well, the free never spared us a thought! —You mean, then, that you were capable of wishing for a world war? —When all those people were given sentences in 1950 lasting till the mid-1970s, what hope were they left with except that of world war?

I am appalled myself when I remember now the false and baneful hopes we cherished at the time. General nuclear destruction was no way out for anyone. And leaving aside the nuclear danger, a state of war only serves as an excuse for domestic tyranny and reinforces it. But my story will be distorted if I do not tell the truth about our feelings that summer.

Romain Rolland's generation in their youth were depressed by the constant expectation of war, but our generation of prisoners was depressed by its absence—and not to say so would be to tell less than the truth about the spirit of the Special Political Camps. This was what they had driven us to. World war might bring us either a speedier death (they might open fire from the watchtowers, poison our bread, or infect us with germs, German fashion),

or it just might bring freedom. In either case, deliverance would be much nearer than the end of a twenty-five-year sentence.

This was what Petya P——v counted on. Among those in our cell Petya P——v was the last living soul to arrive from Europe. Immediately after the war, cells everywhere were packed with these Russkies returning from Europe. But the first arrivals were long ago in camps or in the ground, and the rest had vowed to stay away. Where, then, had Petya sprung from? He had come home of his own free will in November, 1949, when normal people were no longer returning.

The war had overtaken him just outside Kharkov, where he attended an industrial school in which he had been compulsorily enrolled. Just as unceremoniously the Germans carried these young lads off to Germany. There he remained as an "Ost-Arbeiter" to the end of the war, and there his philosophy of life was formed: a man must find an easy way of living, not work as he had been made to work from infancy. In the West, taking advantage of European credulity and lax frontier controls, he had smuggled French vehicles into Italy and Italian vehicles into France and sold them off cheaply. The French, however, had tracked him down and arrested him. He then wrote to the Soviet Embassy, saying that he wanted to return to his beloved Fatherland. P——v's reasoning was that in France he might get ten years, but would have to serve his sentence in full, whereas in the Soviet Union he would get twenty-five as a traitor—but then, the first drops of the coming storm, the Third World War, were already falling; the Union, he thought, wouldn't last even three years, so it would pay him to go to a Soviet prison. Instant friends arrived from the embassy and clasped Petya P——v to their bosoms. The French authorities were glad to hand over a thief.[3] Some thirty others just like Petya were assembled in the embassy. They were given a comfortable sea passage to Murmansk, let loose to wander freely about the town, and picked up again one by one in the course of the next twenty-four hours.

For his cellmates Petya now took the place of Western newspapers (he had followed the Kravchenko trial in detail), Western theatre (he skillfully performed Western tunes with

3. French statistics are said to show that between the First and Second World Wars the crime rate was lower among Russian émigrés than among any other ethnic group. After the Second World War the opposite was the case: of all the ethnic groups, the Russians —Soviet citizens who had fetched up in France—had the highest crime rate.

his cheeks and lips), and Western films (he told us the stories and mimed the action).

How free and easy things were in the Kuibyshev Transit Prison! The inmates of different cells occasionally met in the common yard. From under the muzzles we could exchange remarks with other transports as they were driven across the yard. On our way to the latrine we could approach the open windows (which were barred but unscreened) of the family barracks, where women with several children were held. (They, too, were on their way into exile from the Baltic States and the Western Ukraine.) And between the two converted stables there was a crack, known as the "telephone," where interested persons lay on either side of the wall discussing the news from morning to night.

All these freedoms excited us still more; we felt the ground firmer under our own feet and imagined that it was becoming uncomfortably warm under the feet of our jailers. When we walked about the yard we raised our faces to the sun-bleached July sky. We should not have been surprised, and not at all alarmed, if a V formation of foreign bombers had emerged from nowhere. Life as it was meant nothing to us.

Prisoners traveling in the other direction from the Karabas Transit Prison brought rumors of notices stuck on walls: "We won't take any more!" We worked ourselves up to white heat, and one sultry night in Omsk when we were being crammed and screwed into a prison van, like lumps of sweating, steaming meat through a mincer, we yelled out of the depths at our warders: "Just wait, you vermin! Truman will see you off! They'll drop the atom bomb on your heads!" And the cowards said nothing. They were uneasily aware that our resistance was growing stronger and —so we sensed—that justice was more and more clearly on our side. We were so sick with longing for justice that we should not have minded if we and our tormentors were incinerated by the same bomb. We were in that final stage at which there is nothing to lose.

If this is not brought into the open, the full story of the Archipelago in the fifties will not have been told.

The prison at Omsk, which had known Dostoyevsky, was not like any old Gulag transit prison, hastily knocked together from matchwood. It was a formidable jail from the time of Catherine II, and its dungeons were particularly terrible. You could never imagine a better film set than one of its underground cells. The

small square window is at the top of an oblique shaft up to ground level. The depth of this opening—three meters—tells you what the walls are like. The cell has no ceiling, but massive, menacing vaults converge overhead. One wall is wet—water seeps through from the soil and leaks onto the floor. In the morning and in the evening it is dark, on the brightest afternoon half-dark. There are no rats, but you fancy that you can smell them. Although the vaulted roof dips so low that you can touch it in places, the jailers have contrived to erect two-tier bed platforms even here, with the lower level barely raised above the floor, ankle high.

You might think that this jail would stifle the vague mutinous anticipations which had grown in us in the slack Kuibyshev Transit Prison. But no! In the evening, by the light of a 15-watt bulb, no brighter than a candle, Drozdov, the bald, sharp-featured churchwarden of the cathedral church at Odessa, takes his stand near the mouth of the window shaft, and in a voice that is weak yet full of feeling, the voice of a man whose life is ending, sings an old revolutionary song.

> Black as the conscience of tyrant or traitor,
> The shades of the autumn night fall.
> Blacker than night, looming out of the darkness,
> Ghostlike—the grim prison wall.

He sings only for us, but in this place if you shouted aloud no one would hear. As he sings, his prominent Adam's apple runs up and down under the withered brown skin of his neck. He sings and shudders, he remembers, lets decades of Russian life flow through him, and we shudder in sympathy.

> Though all's silent within, it's a jail, not a graveyard—
> Sentry, ah, sentry, beware!

A song like that in a prison like that![4] Not a false note, not a false word! Every note, every word in tune with what awaited our generation of prisoners.

Then we settle down to sleep in the yellow gloom, the cold, the damp. Right, who's going to tell us a story?

A voice is heard—that of Ivan Alekseyevich Spassky, a sort of composite voice of all Dostoyevsky's heroes. A voice that falters,

4. It is a great pity that Shostakovich did not hear this song *in that place*. Either he wouldn't have touched it or he would have expressed its modern instead of its dead significance.

chokes, is never calm, seems about to break at any moment into weeping or a cry of pain. The most primitive tale by Breshko-Breshkovsky, "The Red Madonna," for instance, retold in such a voice, charged with faith, with suffering, with hatred, sounds like the *Chanson de Roland.* Whether it is true or pure fiction, the story of Victor Voronin, of how he raced 150 kilometers on foot to Toledo, and how the siege of Alcazar was raised, etches itself on our memories like an epic.

Spassky's own life would make a better novel than many. In his youth he took part in the Campaign on the Ice.* He fought throughout the Civil War. He emigrated to Italy. He graduated from a Russian ballet school abroad (Karsavina's, I think), and also learned cabinetmaking in the household of some Russian countess. (Later on, in the camps, he amazed us by making himself some miniature tools and fashioning for the bosses furniture of such exquisite workmanship, with such elegantly curving lines, that they were left speechless. True, it took him a month to make a little table.) He toured Europe with the ballet. He was a news cameraman for an Italian company during the Spanish Civil War. Under the slightly disguised name of Giovanni Paschi, he became a major commanding a battalion in the Italian army and in summer, 1942, arrived back on the Don. His battalion was promptly surrounded though the Russians were still retreating almost everywhere. Left to himself, Spassky would have fought to the death, but the Italians, mere boys, started weeping—they wanted to live! After some hesitation Major Paschi hung out the white flag. He could have committed suicide, but by now he was itching to take a look at some Soviet Russians. He might have gone through an ordinary prisoner-of-war camp and been back in Italy within four years, but his Russian soul was impatient of restraint and he got into conversation with the officers who had captured him. A fatal mistake! If you are unlucky enough to be Russian, conceal the fact like a shameful disease, or it will go hard with you! First they kept him for a year in the Lubyanka. Then for three years in the International Camp at Kharkov. (There was such a place—full of Spaniards, Italians, Japanese.) Then without taking into account the four years he had already served, they doled out another twenty-five. Twenty-five—what a hope! He was doomed to a speedy end in *katorga.*

The jails at Omsk, and then at Pavlodar, took us in because—and this was a serious oversight!—there was no specialized transit

prison in either city. Indeed, in Pavlodar—what a disgrace!—there wasn't even a prison van and they marched us briskly from the station to the jail, many blocks away, without worrying about the local population—just like before the Revolution, or in the first decade after. In the parts of town we went through there were still neither pavements nor piped water, and the little one-story houses were sinking into the gray sand. The city proper began with the two-story white stone jail.

But by twentieth-century standards this was a jail to soothe rather than horrify, to inspire laughter rather than terror. A spacious, peaceful yard, with wretched grass growing here and there, divided by reassuringly low fences into little squares for exercise. There were widely spaced bars across the cell windows on the second floor, and no muzzles, so that you could stand on the window sill and examine the neighborhood. Directly below, under your feet, between the wall of the building and the outer prison wall, an enormous dog would run across the yard dragging his chain when something disturbed him, and give a couple of gruff barks. But he, too, was not a bit like a prison dog—not a terrifying German shepherd trained to attack people, but a shaggy yellow-white mongrel (they breed dogs like that in Kazakhstan), and already pretty old by the look of him. He was like one of those good-natured elderly wardens transferred to the camps from the army, who thought prison service a dog's life, and did not care who knew it.

Beyond the prison wall we could see a street, a beer stall, and people walking or standing there—people who had come to hand in parcels for the prisoners and were waiting to get their boxes and wrapping paper back. Farther on there were blocks and blocks of one-story houses, the great bend of the Irtysh and open country vanishing beyond the river into the distance.

A lively girl, who had just got back from the guardhouse with her empty basket, looked up and saw us waving to her from the window, but pretended not to notice. She walked unhurriedly, demurely past the beer stall, until she could not be seen from the guardhouse, and there her whole manner changed abruptly: she dropped the basket, frantically waved both arms in the air, and smiled at us. Then she signaled with nimble fingers: "Write notes!" then (an elliptical sweep of the arm): "Throw them to me, throw them to me!" then (pointing in the direction of the town): "I'll take them and pass them on for you." Then she opened both arms wide:

"What else do you need? What can I do for you? I'm a friend!"

Her behavior was so natural and straightforward, so unlike that of the harassed and hag-ridden "free population," our bullied and baffled free citizens. What could it mean? Were times changing? Or was this just Kazakhstan? Where half the population, remember, were exiles . . .

Sweet, fearless girl! How quickly and accurately you had learned the prison-gate skills! How happy it made me (and I felt a tear in my eye) to know that there are still people like you! Accept our homage, whoever you are! If our people had all been like you there would have been not a hope in hell of imprisoning them.

The infamous machine would have jammed!

We had, of course, bits of pencil lead in our jackets. And scraps of paper. And it would have been easy to pick off a lump of plaster, tie a note to it with thread, and throw it clear of the wall. But there was absolutely nothing we could ask her to do for us in Pavlodar! So we simply bowed to her and waved our greetings.

We were driven into the desert. Even the unprepossessing overgrown village of Pavlodar we should soon remember as a glittering metropolis.

We were now taken over by an escort party from Steplag (but not, fortunately, from the Dzhezkazgan Camp Division: throughout the journey we had kept our fingers crossed that we would not end up in the copper mines). The trucks sent to collect us had built-up sides and grilles were attached to the rear of their cabs, to protect the Tommy-gunners from us as though we were wild animals. They packed us in tightly, facing backward, with our legs twisted under us, and in this position jogged and jolted us over the potholes for eight hours on end. The Tommy-gunners sat on the roof of the cab, with the muzzles of their guns trained on our backs throughout the journey.

Up front rode lieutenants and sergeants, and in the cab of our truck there was an officer's wife with a little girl of six. When we stopped the little girl would jump down and run through the grass picking flowers and calling in a clear voice to her mother. She was not in the least put out by the Tommy guns, the dogs, the ugly shaven heads of the prisoners sticking up over the sides of the lorries; our strange world cast no shadow on the meadow and the flowers, and she didn't even spare us a curious glance. . . . I remembered the son of a sergeant major at the Special Prison in

Zagorsk. His favorite game was making two other little boys, the sons of neighbors, clasp their hands behind their backs (sometimes he tied their hands) and walk along the road while he walked alongside with a stick, escorting them.

As the fathers live, so the children play.

We crossed the Irtysh. We rode for a long time through water meadows, then over dead flat steppe. The breath of the Irtysh, the freshness of evening on the steppe, the scent of wormwood, enveloped us whenever we stopped for a few minutes and the swirling clouds of light-gray dust raised by the wheels sank to the ground. Thickly powdered with this dust, we looked at the road behind us (we were not allowed to turn our heads), kept silent (we were not allowed to talk), and thought about our destiny, the camp with the strange, difficult, un-Russian name. We had read the name on our case files, hanging upside down from the top shelf in the Stolypin—EKIBASTUZ. But nobody could imagine where it was on the map, and only Lieutenant Colonel Oleg Ivanov remembered that it was a coal-mining area. We even supposed that it might be somewhere quite close to the Chinese border (and this made some of us happy, since they had yet to learn that China was even worse than our own country). Captain Second Class Burkovsky (a new boy and a 25-er, he still looked askance at us, because he was a Communist imprisoned in error, while all around were enemies of the people: he acknowledged me only because I was a former Soviet officer and had not been a prisoner of war) reminded me of something I had learned at the university and forgotten: if we traced a meridian line on the ground at the autumnal equinox and subtracted the meridional altitude of the sun on September 23 from 90, we should find our latitude. This was reassuring—although there was no way of discovering our longitude.

On and on they drove. Darkness fell. The stars were big in the black sky and we saw clearly now that we were being carried south-southwest.

Dust danced in the beams of headlights behind us. Patches of the dust cloud whipped up over the whole road, but were visible only where the headlights picked them out. A strange mirage rose before me: the world was a heaving sea of blackness, except for those whirling luminous particles forming sinister pictures of things to come.

To what far corner of the earth, what godforsaken hole, were

they taking us? Where were we fated to make our revolution?

Our legs, doubled under us, became so numb that they might not have been ours. It was very near midnight when we reached a camp surrounded by a high wooden fence and—out in the dark steppe, beside a dark sleeping settlement—bright with electric light, in the guardhouse and around the boundary fence.

After another roll call with full particulars—"March, nineteen hundred and seventy-five!"—they led us through the towering double gates for what was left of our quarter-century.

The camp was asleep, but all the windows of all the huts were brightly lit, as though the tide of life was running high. Lights on at night—that meant prison rules. The doors of the huts were fastened from outside by heavy padlocks. Bars stood out black against the brightly lit rectangles of the windows.

The orderly who came out to meet us had *number patches* stuck all over him.

You've read in the newspapers that in Nazi camps people had *numbers* sewn on their clothes, haven't you?

Chapter 3

■

Chains, Chains . . .

Our eager hopes, our leaping expectations, were soon crushed. The wind of change was blowing only in drafty corridors—in the transit prisons. Here, behind the tall fences of the Special Camps, its breath did not reach us. And although there were only political prisoners in these camps, no mutinous leaflets hung on posts.

They say that at Minlag the blacksmiths refused to forge bars for hut windows. All glory to those as yet nameless heroes! They were real people. They were put in the camp jail, and the bars for Minlag were forged at Kotlas. No one supported the smiths.

The Special Camps began with that uncomplaining, indeed eager submission to which prisoners had been trained by three generations of Corrective Labor Camps.

Prisoners brought in from the Polar North had no cause to be grateful for the Kazakh sunshine. At Novorudnoye station they jumped down from the red boxcars onto ground no less red. This was the famous Dzhezkazgan copper, and the lungs of those who mined it never held out more than four months. There and then the warders joyfully demonstrated their new weapon on the first prisoners to step out of line: handcuffs, which had not been used in the Corrective Labor Camps, gleaming nickel handcuffs, which went into mass production in the Soviet Union to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the October Revolution. (Somewhere there was a factory in which workers with graying mustaches, the model proletarians of Soviet literature, were making them—unless we suppose that Stalin and Beria did it themselves?) These handcuffs were remarkable in that they could be clamped on very tight.

Serrated metal plates were let into them, so that when a camp guard banged a man's handcuffed wrists against his knee, more of the teeth would slip into the lock, causing the prisoner greater pain. In this way the handcuffs became an instrument of torture instead of a mere device to inhibit activity: they crushed the wrists, causing constant acute pain, and prisoners were kept like that for hours, always with their hands behind their backs, palms outward. The warders also perfected the practice of trapping four fingers in the handcuffs, which caused acute pain in the finger joints.

In Berlag the handcuffs were used religiously: for every trifle, even for failure to take off your cap to a warder, they put on the handcuffs (hands behind the back) and stood you by the guardhouse. The hands became swollen and numb, and grown men wept: "I won't do it again, sir! Please take the cuffs off!" (Wondrous were the ways of Berlag: not only did prisoners enter the mess hall on command, they lined up at the tables on command, sat down on command, lowered their spoons into the gruel on command, rose and left the room on command.)

It was easy enough for someone to scribble the order: "Establish Special Camps! Submit draft regulations by such and such a date!" But somewhere hard-working penologists (and psychologists, and connoisseurs of camp life) had to think out the details: How could screws already galling be made yet tighter? How could burdens already backbreaking be made yet heavier? How could the lives of Gulag's denizens, already far from easy, be made harder yet? Transferred from Corrective Labor Camps to Special Camps, these animals must be aware at once of their strictness and harshness—but obviously someone must first devise a detailed program!

Naturally, the security measures were strengthened. In all Special Camps the perimeter was reinforced, additional strands of barbed wire were strung up, and coils of barbed wire were scattered about the camp's fringe area. On the path by which prisoners went to work, machine guns were set up in readiness at all main crossroads and turnings, and gunners crouched behind them.

Every Camp Division had its stone jailhouse—its Disciplinary Barracks (BUR).[1] Anyone put in the Disciplinary Barracks invari-

1. I shall continue to call it by this name, which prisoners remembered from the Corrective Labor Camps and went on using out of habit, although it is not quite accurate in this context: it was the camp jail, neither more nor less.

ably had his padded jacket taken from him: torture by cold was an important feature of the BUR. But every hut was just as much a jail, since all windows were barred, and latrine buckets were brought in for the night so that all doors could be locked. Moreover, there were one or two Disciplinary Barracks in each camp area, with intensified security, each a separate camplet within the camp; these were locked as soon as the prisoners got in from work —on the model of the earlier *katorga.* (They were BUR's really, but we called them "rezhimki.")

Then again, they quite blatantly borrowed from the Nazis a practice which had proved valuable to them—the substitution of a number for the prisoner's name, his "I," his human individuality, so that the difference between one man and another was a digit more or less in an otherwise identical row of figures. This measure, too, could be a great hardship, provided it was implemented consistently and fully. This they tried to do. Every new recruit, when he "played the piano" in the Special Section (i.e., had his fingerprints taken, as was the practice in ordinary prisons, but not in Corrective Labor Camps), had to hang around his neck a board suspended from a rope. His number—Shch 262 will do as an example—was set up on the board (in Ozerlag by now there were even numbers beginning with *yery:** the alphabet was too short!) and in this guise he had his picture taken by the Special Section's photographer. (All those photographs are still preserved somewhere! One of these days we shall see them!)

They took the board from around the prisoner's neck (he wasn't a dog, after all) and gave him instead four (or in some camps three) white patches measuring 8 centimeters by 15. These he had to sew onto his clothes, usually on the back, the breast, above the peak of his cap, and on one leg or arm (Plate No. 2)—but the regulations varied slightly from camp to camp. Quilted clothing was deliberately damaged in stipulated places before the patches were sewn on: in the camp workshops a separate team of tailors was detailed to damage new clothing: squares of fabric were cut out to expose the wadding underneath. This was done so that prisoners trying to escape could not unpick their number patches and pass as free workmen. In some other camps it was simpler still: the number was burned into the garments with bleaching fluid.

Warders were ordered to address prisoners by their numbers only, and to ignore and forget their names. It would have been pretty unpleasant if they had kept it up—but they couldn't. Rus-

sians aren't Germans. Even in the first year warders occasionally slipped up and called people by their names, and as time went by they did it more often. To make things easier for the warders, a plywood shingle was nailed onto each bunk, at every level, with the occupant's number on it. Thus the warder could call out the sleeper's number even when he could not see it on his garments, and if a man was missing the warder would know at once who was breaking the rules. Another useful field of activity opened up for warders: they could quietly turn the key in the lock and tiptoe into the hut before getting-up time, to take the numbers of those who had risen too soon, or they could burst into the hut exactly on time and take the numbers of those who were not yet up. In both cases you could be summarily awarded a spell in the hole, but in the Special Camp it was usually thought better to demand a *written explanation*—although pens and ink were forbidden and no paper was supplied. This tedious, long-winded, offensive procedure was rather a clever invention, especially as the camp administration had plenty of salaried idlers with leisure to scrutinize the explanations. Instead of simply punishing you out of hand, they required you to explain in writing why your bed was untidy, why the number plate at your bunk was askew and why you had done nothing about it, why a number patch on your jacket was soiled and why you had not put that right; why a cigarette had been found on you in the hut; why you had not taken your cap off to a warder.[2] Questions so profound that writing answers to them was even more of a torment to the literate than to the illiterate. But refusal to write meant that your punishment would be more severe! The note was written, with the neatness and precision which respect for the disciplinary staff demanded, delivered to the warder in charge of the hut, then examined by the assistant disciplinary officer or the disciplinary officer, who in turn wrote on it his decision about punishment.

In work rolls, too, it was the rule to write numbers before names. Why before and not instead of names? They were afraid to give up names altogether! However you look at it, a name is a reliable handle, a man is pegged to his name forever, whereas a number is blown away at a puff. If only the numbers were branded or picked out on the man himself, that would be something! But

2. Doroshevich was surprised to find prisonsers taking their caps off to the prison governor on Sakhalin. But we had to uncover whenever we met an ordinary warder.

they never got around to it. Though they might easily have done so; they came close enough.

The oppressive number system tended to break down for yet another reason—because we were not in solitary confinement, because we heard each other's voices and not just those of the warders. The prisoners themselves not only did not use each other's numbers, they did not even notice them. (How, you may wonder, could anyone fail to notice those glaring white patches on a black background? When a lot of us were assembled—on work line-up, or for inspection—the bewildering array of figures gave you spots before your eyes. It was like staring at a logarithm table—but only while it was new to you.) So little did you notice them that you did not even know the numbers of your closest friends and teammates; your own was the only one you remembered. (Some dandified trusties carefully saw to it that their numbers were neatly, even jauntily, sewn on, with the edges tucked in, with minute stitching, to make them really pretty. Lackeys born and bred! My friends and I, on the contrary, took care that our numbers should look as ugly as possible.)

The Special Camp regime assumed a total lack of publicity, assumed that no one would ever complain, no one would ever be released, no one would ever break out. (Neither Auschwitz nor Katyn had taught our bosses anything.) And so the first Special Camps were Special Camps with truncheons. It was, as a rule, not the warders who carried them (they had the handcuffs!), but trusted prisoners—hut orderlies and foremen; they, however, could beat us to their hearts' content, with the full approval of authority. At Dzhezkazgan before work line-up the work assigners stood by the doors of the huts with clubs and shouted: "Out you come—and *no last man!!*" (The reader will have understood that if there should be a *last man,* it was immediately as though he had never been.)[3] For the same reason, the authorities were not greatly upset if, for instance, a winter transport from Karbas to Spassk—two hundred men—froze on the way, if all the wards and corridors of the Medical Section were packed with the survivors, rotting alive with a sickening stench, and Dr. Kolesnikov amputated dozens of arms, legs, and noses.[4] The wall of silence was

3. In Spassk in 1949 something snapped. The foremen were called to the staff hut, ordered to put away their clubs, and advised to do without them in future

4. This Dr. Kolesnikov was one of the "experts" who had shortly before signed the mendacious findings of the Katyn commission (to the effect that it was not we who had

so reliable that the celebrated disciplinary officer at Spassk, Captain Vorobyov, and his underlings first "punished" an imprisoned Hungarian ballerina by putting her in the black hole, then handcuffed her, then, while she was handcuffed, raped her.

The disciplinary regime envisaged patient attention to every detail. Thus prisoners were not allowed to keep photographs—either of themselves (which might help escapers!) or of their relatives. Should any be found they were confiscated and destroyed. A barracks representative in the women's division at Spassk, an elderly schoolteacher, put a small picture of Tchaikovsky on a table. The warder removed it and gave her three days in the black hole. "But it's a picture of Tchaikovsky!" "I don't care whose picture it is; in this camp women aren't allowed to have pictures of men." In Kengir prisoners were allowed to receive meal in their food parcels (why not?), but there was a rigorous prohibition against boiling it, and if a prisoner managed to make a fire between a couple of bricks the warder would kick over the pot and make the culprit smother the flames with his hands. (Later on, it is true, they built a little shed for cooking, but two months later the stove was demolished and the place was used to accommodate some pigs belonging to the officers, and security officer Belyaev's horse.)

While they were introducing various disciplinary novelties, our masters did not forget what was best in the practice of the Corrective Labor Camps. In Ozerlag Captain Mishin, head of a Camp Division, tied recalcitrants behind a sleigh and towed them to work.

By and large, the regime proved so satisfactory that prisoners from the former political camps *(katorga)* were now kept in the Special Camps on the same footing as the rest and in the same quarters, distinguished only by the serial letters on their number patches. (Though if there was a shortage of huts, as at Spassk, it was they who would be put to live in barns and stables.)

So that the Special Camp, though not officially called *katorga,* was its legitimate successor and merged with it.

For a prison regime to have a satisfactory effect on the prisoners, it must be grounded also on sound rules about work and diet.

The work chosen for the Special Camps was always the hardest

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murdered the Polish officers). For this a just Providence had put him in this camp. But why did the powers of this world want him there? So that he would not talk too much. "Othello's occupation's gone."

in the locality. As Chekhov has truly remarked: "The established view of society, and with some qualifications of literature, is that no harder and more degrading form of hard labor can be found than that in the mines. If in Nekrasov's *Russian Women* the hero's job had been to catch fish for the jail or to fell trees, many readers would have felt unsatisfied." (Why speak so disparagingly of tree felling, Anton Pavlovich? Lumbering is not so bad; it will do the trick.) The first divisions of Steplag, those it began with, were all engaged in copper mining (the First and Second Divisions at Rudnik, the Third at Kengir, and the Fourth at Dzhezkazgan). They drilled dry, and the dust from the waste rock quickly brought on silicosis and tuberculosis.[5] Sick prisoners were sent to die in the celebrated Spassk camp (near Karaganda)—the "All-Union convalescent home" of the Special Camps.

Spassk deserves a special mention here.

It was to Spassk that they sent terminal cases for whom other camps could no longer find any use. But what a surprise! No sooner did the sick cross the salubrious boundary lines of Spassk than they turned into able-bodied workers. For Colonel Chechev, commandant of the whole Steplag complex, the Spassk Camp Division was one of his special favorites. This thick-set thug would fly in from Karaganda, have his boots cleaned in the guardhouse, and walk through the camp trying to spot prisoners not working. He liked to say: "I've only got one invalid in the whole Spassk camp—he's short of both legs. And even he's on light duties—he runs errands." All one-legged men were employed on sedentary work: breaking stones for road surfacing, or grading firewood. Neither crutches nor even a missing arm was any obstacle to work in Spassk. One of Chechev's ideas: putting four one-armed men to carry a stretcher (two of them left-armed, two of them right-armed). An idea thought up for Chechev: driving the machines in the engineering shop by hand when there was no electric power. Something Chechev liked: having his "own professor." So he allowed the biophysicist Chizhevsky to set up a *laboratory* at Spassk (with empty benches). But when Chizhevsky, using worthless waste materials, devised an antisilicosis mask for the Dzhezkazgan workers—Chechev would not put it into production. They've always worked without masks; why complicate things?

5. Under a law of 1886, no form of work which might be injurious to health was permitted even if it was the prisoner's own choice.

After all, there must be a regular turnover, to make room for the new intake.

At the end of 1948 there were about 15,000 prisoners, male and female, in Spassk. It was a huge camp area; the posts of the boundary fence went uphill in some places, and the corner watchtowers were out of sight of each other. The work of self-segregation gradually proceeded: the prisoners built inner walls to separate women, workers, complete invalids (this would hinder communications within the camp and make things easier for the bosses). Six thousand men building a dike had to walk 12 kilometers to work. Since they were sick men, it took them more than two hours each way. To this must be *added* an eleven-hour working day. (It was rare for anyone to last two months on that job.) The job next in importance was in the stone quarries—which were inside the camp itself, both in the men's and in the women's section (the island had its own minerals!). In the men's section the quarry was on a hillside. The stone was blasted loose with ammonal after the day's work was over, and next day the sick men broke the lumps up with hammers. In the women's zone they didn't use ammonal—instead, the women dug down to the rock layers with picks, then smashed the stone with sledge hammers. The hammer heads, of course, came away from the handles, and new ones sometimes broke. To replace a head, a hammer had to be sent to a different camp zone. Nonetheless, every woman had an output norm of 0.9 cubic meters a day, and since they could not meet it there was a long period during which they were put on short rations (400 grams)—until the men taught them to pinch stone from old piles before the daily accounting. Remember that all this work was done not only by sick people, not only without any mechanical aids at all, but in the harsh winter of the steppes (at temperatures as low as 30 to 35 degrees below freezing, and with a wind blowing), and what is more, in *summer clothing,* since there was no provision for the issue of warm clothing to *nonworkers,* i.e., to the unfit. P——r recalls how she wielded a huge hammer, practically naked, in frosts as severe as this. The value of this work to the Fatherland becomes very clear when we add that for some reason the stone from the women's quarry proved unsuitable as building material, and on a certain day a certain high official gave instructions that the women should dump all the stone they had quarried in a year back where it came from, cover it with soil, and lay out a park (they never, of course, got quite

that far). In the men's zone the stone was good. The procedure for delivering it to the construction site was as follows: after inspection, the whole work force (around eight thousand men—all those who were alive on that particular day) was marched up the hill, and no one was allowed down again unless he was carrying stone. On holidays patients took their constitutional twice daily—morning and evening.

Then came such jobs as self-enclosure, building quarters for the camp administration and the guards (dwelling houses, a club, a bathhouse, a school), and work in the fields and gardens.

The produce from these gardens also went to the free personnel, while the prisoners got only beet tops: this stuff was brought in by the truckload and dumped near the kitchen, where it rotted until the cooks pitchforked it into their cauldrons. (A bit like feeding cattle, would you say?) The eternal broth was made from these beet tops, with the daily addition of one ladleful of mush. Here is a horticultural idyll from Spassk: about 150 prisoners made a concerted rush at one of the garden plots, lay on the ground, and gnawed vegetables pulled from the beds. The guards swarmed around, beating them with sticks, but they just lay there munching.

Nonworking invalids were given 550 grams of bread, working invalids 650. Medicines were as yet unknown in Spassk (where would you find enough for a mob like that! and they were there to peg out anyway), and so were proper beds. In some huts bunks were moved up together, and four men instead of two squeezed onto a double bed platform.

Oh, yes—there is one job I haven't yet mentioned! Every day 110 to 120 men went out to dig graves. Two Studebakers carried the corpses in slatted boxes, with their legs and arms sticking out. Even in the halcyon summer months of 1949, sixty or seventy people died every day, and in winter it was one hundred (the Estonians who worked in the morgue kept the count).

(In other Special Camps mortality was not so high; prisoners were better fed, but their work was harder, too, since they were not unfit: the reader can make the necessary adjustment himself.)

All this was in 1949 (the year one thousand nine hundred and forty-nine), the thirty-second year after the October Revolution, four years after the war, with its harsh imperatives, had ended, three years after the conclusion of the Nuremberg Trials, where mankind at large had learned about the horrors of the Nazi camps

and said with a sigh of relief: "It can never happen again."[6]

Add to all this that on transfer to a Special Camp your links with the outside world, with the wife who waited for you and for your letters, with the children for whom you were becoming a mythical figure, were as good as severed. (Two letters a year—but even these were not posted, after you had put into them thoughts saved up for months. Who would venture to check the work of the women censors on the MGB staff? They often made their task lighter by burning some of the letters they were supposed to censor. If your letter did not get through, the post office could always be blamed. In Spassk some prisoners were once called in to repair a stove in the censors' office, and they found there hundreds of unposted letters which the censors had forgotten to burn. Conditions in the Special Camps were such that the stove menders were afraid to tell their friends—the State Security boys might make short work of them. . . . These women censors in the Ministry of State Security who burned the *souls* of prisoners to save themselves a little trouble—were they any more humane than the SS women who collected the skin and hair of murdered people?) As for family visits, they were unthinkable—the address of every Special Camp was classified and no outsider was allowed to go there.

Let us also add that the Hemingwayesque question *to have* or to *have not* hardly arose in the Special Camps, since it had been firmly resolved from the day of their creation in favor of *not having.* Not having money and receiving no wages (in Corrective Labor Camps it was still possible to earn a pittance, but here not a single kopeck). Not having a change of shoes or clothing, nor anything to put on underneath, to keep yourself warm or dry. Underwear (and what underwear—Hemingway's pauper would hardly have deigned to put it on) was changed twice a month; other clothes, and shoes, twice a year; it was all laid down with a crystalline clarity worthy of Arakcheyev. (Not in the first days of the camp, but later on, they fitted out a permanent storeroom,

6. Let me hasten to put the reader's mind at rest by assuring him that all these Chechevs, Mishins, and Vorobyovs, and also Warder Novgorodov, are flourishing: Chechev in Karaganda, retired with the rank of general. Not one of them has been brought to trial, or ever will be. And what could they be tried for? They were simply *carrying out orders.* They are not to be compared with those Nazis who were simply carrying out orders. If they in any way went beyond their orders, it was of course because of their ideological purity, with the sincerest intentions, out of simple unawareness that Beria, "Great Stalin's faithful comrade in arms," was also an agent of international imperialism.

where clothes were kept until the day of "release," and not handing in any article of wear among your personal belongings was considered a serious offense: it counted as preparation to escape, and meant the black hole and interrogation.) Not to keep food in your locker (you queued in the evening to hand it in at the food store, and in the morning to draw it out again—which effectively occupied those half hours in the morning and evening when you might have had time to think). Not to have anything in manuscript, not to have ink, indelible pencils, or colored pencils, not to have unused paper in excess of one school notebook. And finally, not to have books. (In Spassk they took away books belonging to a prisoner on admission. In our camp we were allowed to keep one or two at first, but one day a wise decree was issued: all books belonging to prisoners must be registered with the Culture and Education Section, where the words "Steplag, Camp Division No. ———" would be stamped on the title page. Henceforward all unstamped books would be confiscated as illegal, while stamped books would be considered the property of the library, not that of their former owners.)

Let us further remind ourselves that in Special Camps searches were more frequent and intensive than in Corrective Labor Camps. (Prisoners were carefully searched each day as they left for and returned from work [Plate No. 3]; huts were searched regularly—floors raised, fire bars levered out of stoves, boards pried up in porches; then there were prison-type personal searches, in which prisoners were stripped and probed, linings ripped away from clothes and soles from shoes.) That after a while they started weeding out every last blade of grass in the camp area "in case somebody hides a weapon there." That free days were taken up by chores about the camp.

If you remember all this, it may not surprise you to hear that making him wear numbers was not the most hurtful and effective way of damaging a prisoner's self-respect: when Ivan Denisovich says, "They weigh nothing, the numbers," it does not mean that he has lost all self-respect—as some haughty critics, who never themselves wore numbers or went hungry, have disapprovingly said—it is just common sense. The numbers were vexatious not because of their psychological or moral effects, as the bosses intended, but for a purely practical reason—that on pain of a spell in the hole we had to waste our leisure hours sewing up hems that had come unstitched, getting the figures touched up by the "art-

ists," or searching for fresh rags to replace patches torn at work.

The people for whom the numbers were indeed the most diabolical of the camp's devices were the devout women members of certain religious sects. There were some of these in the Women's Camp Division near the Suslovo station (Kamyshlag)—about a third of the women there were imprisoned for their religion. Now, it is plainly foretold in the Book of Revelation (Chapter 13, Verse 16) that "it* causes all . . . to be marked on the right hand or the forehead."

These women refused, therefore, to wear numbers—the mark of Satan! Nor would they give signed receipts (to Satan, of course) in return for regulation dress. The camp authorities (Chief of Administration General Grigoryev, head of Separate Camp Site Major Bogush) showed laudable firmness! They gave orders that the women should be *stripped to their shifts,* and have their shoes taken from them (the job went to wardresses who were members of the Komsomol), thus enlisting winter's help in forcing these senseless fanatics to accept regulation dress and sew on their numbers. But even with the temperature below freezing, the women walked about the camp in their shifts and barefoot, refusing to surrender their souls to Satan!

Faced with this spirit (the spirit of reaction, needless to say; enlightened people like ourselves would never protest so strongly about such a thing!), the administration capitulated and gave their clothing back to the sectarians, who put it on without numbers! (Yelena Ivanovna Usova wore hers for the whole ten years; her outer garments and underwear rotted and fell to pieces on her body, but the accounts office could not authorize the issue of any government property without a receipt from her!)

Another annoying thing about the numbers was their size, which enabled the guards to read them from a long way off. They only ever saw us from a distance at which they would have time to bring their guns to the ready and fire, they knew none of us, of course, by name, and since we were dressed identically would have been unable to distinguish one from another but for our numbers. But now, if the guards noticed anybody talking on the march, or changing ranks, or not keeping his hands behind his back, or picking something up from the ground, the guard commander only had to report it to the camp and the culprit could expect the black hole.

The guards were yet another force which could crush a prisoner

like a sparrow caught in a pulping machine. These "red tabs," regular soldiers, these little lads with Tommy guns, were a dark, unreasoning force, knowing nothing of us, never accepting explanations. Nothing could get through from us to them, and from them to us came only angry shouts, the barking of dogs, the grating of breechblocks, bullets. And they, not we, were always right.

In Ekibastuz, where they were adding gravel to a railroad bed, working without a boundary fence but cordoned by guards, a prisoner took a few steps, inside the permitted area, to get some bread from his coat, which he had thrown down—and one of the guards went for him and killed him. The guard, of course, was in the right. He would receive nothing but thanks. I'm sure he has no regrets to this day. Nor did we express our indignation. Needless to say, we wrote no letters about it (and if we had, our complaints would not have gone any further).

On January 19, 1951, our column of five hundred men had reached work site ARM. On one side of us was the boundary fence, with no soldiers between us and it. They were about to let us in through the gates. Suddenly a prisoner called Maloy ("Little," who was in fact a tall, broad-shouldered young man) broke ranks for no obvious reason and absent-mindedly walked toward the guard commander. We got the impression that he was not himself, that he did not know what he was doing. He did not raise his hand, he made no threatening gesture, he simply walked on, lost in thought. The officer in charge, a nasty-looking, foppish little fellow, took fright and started hastily backing away from Maloy, shouting shrilly, and try as he would, unable to draw his pistol. A sergeant Tommy-gunner advanced briskly on Maloy and when he was within a few paces gave him a short burst in the chest and the belly, slowly backing away in his turn. Maloy slowly advanced another two paces before he fell, and tufts of wadding sprang into sight in the back of his jacket, marking the path of the invisible bullets. Although Maloy was down, and the rest of the column had not stirred, the guard commander was so terrified that he rapped out an order to the soldiers and there was a rattle of Tommy guns on all sides, raking the air just above our heads; a machine gun, set up beforehand, began chattering, and many voices vying with each other in hysterical shrillness screamed: "Lie down! Lie down! Lie down!" While the bullets came lower and lower, to the level of the boundary wires. There were half a

thousand of us, but we did not hurl ourselves on the men with the guns and trample on them; we prostrated ourselves and lay with our faces buried in the snow, in a humiliating and helpless position, lay like sheep for more than a quarter of an hour on that Epiphany morning. They could easily have shot every last one of us without having to answer for it: why, this was attempted mutiny!

This was what we were like in the first and second years of the Special Camps—pathetic, crushed slaves—but enough has been said about this period in *Ivan Denisovich.*

How did it come about? Why did so many thousands of these misused creatures, the 58's—damn it all, they were *political* offenders, and now that they were separated, segregated, concentrated, surely they would *behave* like *politicals*—why, then, did they behave so contemptibly, so submissively?

These camps could not have *begun* differently. Both the oppressed and their oppressors had come from Corrective Labor Camps, and both sides had decades of a master-and-slave tradition behind them. Their old way of life was transferred with them, they kept the old way of thinking alive and warm in each other's minds, because they traveled a hundred or so at a time from the same Camp Division. They brought with them to their new place the firm belief inculcated in all of them that men are rats, that man eats man, and that it can be no other way. Each of them brought with him a concern for his own fate alone, and a total indifference to the fate of others. He came prepared to give no quarter in the struggle for a foreman's job or a trusty's cozy spot in a warm kitchen, in the bread-cutting room, in the stores, in the accounts office, or in the Culture and Education Section.

When a man is being moved to a new place all by himself, he can base his hopes of *getting fixed up* there only on luck and his own unscrupulousness. But when men are transported together over great distances in the same boxcar for two or three or four weeks, are kept stewing in the same transit prisons, are marched along in the same columns, they have plenty of time to put their heads together, to judge which of them has a foreman's fist, which knows how to crawl to the bosses, to play dirty tricks, to feather his nest at the expense of the working prisoners—and a close-knit *family* of trusties naturally does not indulge in dreams of freedom but joins forces to uphold the cause of slavery, clubs together to seize the key posts in the new camp and keep out trusties from

elsewhere. While the benighted workers, completely reconciled to their harsh and hopeless lot, get together to form good work teams and find themselves a decent foreman in the new place.

All these people had forgotten beyond recall not only that each of them was a man, that he carried the divine spark within him, that he was capable of higher things; they had forgotten, too, that they need not forever bend their backs, that freedom is as much man's right as air, that they were all so-called *politicals,* and that there were now no strangers in their midst.

True, there were still a very few thieves among them. The authorities had despaired of deterring their favorites from frequent attempts to break out (under Article 82 of the Criminal Code the penalty was not more than two years, and the thieves had already collected decades and centuries of extra time, so why should they not run away if there was no one to dissuade them?) and decided to pin charges under Article 58, Section 14 (economic sabotage), on would-be escapers.

Altogether not very many thieves went into Special Camps, just a handful in each transport, but in their code there were enough of them to bully and insult people, to act as hut wardens and walk around with sticks (like the two Azerbaijanis in Spassk who were subsequently hacked to death), and to help the trusties plant on these new islands of the Archipelago the flag (shit-colored, trimmed with black) of the foul and slavish Destructive-Labor Camps.

The camp at Ekibastuz had been set up a year before our arrival —in 1949—and everything had settled down in the old pattern brought there in the minds of prisoners and masters. Every hut had a warden, a deputy warden, and senior prisoners, some of whom relied on their fists and others on talebearing to keep their subjects down. There was a separate hut for the trusties, where they took tea reclining on their bunks and amicably settled the fate of whole work sites and whole work teams. Thanks to the peculiar design of the Finnish huts,* there were in each of them separate *cabins* occupied ex officio by one or two privileged prisoners. Work assigners rabbit-punched you, foremen smacked you in the kisser, warders laid on with the lash. The cooks were a mean and surly lot. All storerooms were taken over by freedom-loving Caucasians. Work-assignment duties were monopolized by a clique of scoundrels who were all supposed to be engineers. Stool pigeons carried their tales to the Security Section punctually and

with impunity. The camp, which had started a year ago in tents, now had a stone jailhouse—which, however, was only half-built and so always badly overcrowded: prisoners sentenced to the hole had to wait in line for a month or even two. Law and order had broken down, no doubt about it! Queuing for the hole! (I was sentenced to the hole, and my turn never came.)

True, the thieves (or bitches, to be more precise, since they were not too grand to take posts in the camp) had lost a little of their shine in the course of the year. They felt themselves somehow cramped—they had no rising generation behind them, no reinforcements in sight, no one eagerly tiptoeing after them. Things somehow weren't working out for them. Hut warden Mageran, when the disciplinary officer introduced him to the lined-up prisoners, did his best to glower at them defiantly, but self-doubt soon took possession of him and his star sank ingloriously.

We, like every party of new arrivals, were put under pressure while we were still taking our bath on admission. The bathhouse attendants, barbers, and storemen were on edge and ganged up to attack anyone who tried to make the most diffident complaint about torn underwear or cold water or the heat-sterilization procedure. They were just waiting for such complaints. Several of them at once flew at the offender, like a pack of dogs, yelling in unnaturally loud voices—"You aren't in the Kuibyshev Transit Prison now"—and shoving their hamlike fists under his nose. (This was good psychology. A naked man is ten times more vulnerable than one in clothes. And if newly arrived prisoners are given a bit of a fright before they emerge from the inaugural bath, they will begin camp life with their wings clipped.)

That same Volodya Gershuni, the student who had imagined himself taking a good look around in the camp and deciding "whom to join," was detailed on his very first day to strengthen the camp—by digging a hole for one of the poles to which lights were strung. He was too weak to complete his stint. Orderly Baturin, one of the bitches, who was beginning to sing smaller but still had a bit of bluster in him, called him a *pirate,* and struck him in the face. Gershuni threw down his crowbar and walked right away from the hole. He went to the commandant's office, and made a declaration: "You can put me in the black hole if you like, but I won't go to work as long as your pirates hit people." (The word "pirate" had particularly upset him, because it was strange

to him.) His request was not refused, and he spent two consecutive spells in the black hole, eighteen days in all. (This is how it's done: a prisoner is given five or ten days for a start, then when his time is up, instead of letting him out they wait for him to start protesting and cursing—whereupon they can legitimately *stick him* with a second spell.) After the black hole, they awarded him a further two months of Disciplinary Barracks—which meant that he stayed on in the jailhouse but would go out to work at the limekilns and get hot food and rations according to his output. Realizing that he was sinking deeper and deeper into the mire, Gershuni sought salvation through the Medical Section—he hadn't yet taken the measure of "Madame" Dubinskaya, who was in charge of it. He assumed that he could just present his flat feet for inspection and be excused from the long walk to and from the limekilns. But they wouldn't even take him to the Medical Section—the Ekibastuz Disciplinary Barracks had no use for the out patients' clinic. Gershuni was determined to get there, and he had heard a lot about methods of protest, so one morning when the prisoners were being lined up for work, he stayed on the bed platform, wearing only his underpants. Two warders, "Polundra" (a crackbrained ex-sailor) and Konentsov, dragged him off the bed platform by his feet and hauled him just as he was, in his underpants, to the line-up. As they dragged him he clutched at stones lying on the ground, ready for the builders, and tried to hang on to them. By now he was willing to go to the limekilns—"Just let me get my trousers on" he yelled—but they dragged him along just the same. At the guardhouse, while four thousand men were kept waiting for their work assignments, this puny boy struggled as they tried to handcuff him, shouting, "Gestapo! Fascists!" Polundra and Konentsov, however, forced his head to the ground, put the handcuffs on, and prodded him forward. For some reason, it was not they who were embarrassed, nor the disciplinary officer, Lieutenant Machekhovsky, but Gershuni himself. How could he walk through the whole settlement in his underpants? He refused to do it! A snub-nosed dog handler was standing nearby. Volodya remembered how he muttered: "Stop making such a fuss—fall in with the others. You can sit by the fire—you needn't work." And he held tightly onto his dog, which was struggling to break loose and get at Volodya's throat, because it could see that this lad was defying men with blue shoulder tabs! Volodya was removed from the work-assignment area and taken back to the Disciplinary

Barracks. The handcuffs cut more and more painfully into his wrists behind his back, and another warder, a Cossack, gripped him by the throat and winded him with his knee. Then they threw him on the floor, somebody said in a businesslike, professional voice, "Thrash him till he ——— himself," and they started kicking him with their jackboots about the temples and elsewhere, until he lost consciousness. The next day he was summoned to the Chief Security Officer, and they tried to pin a charge of *terrorist* intentions on him—when they were dragging him along he had clutched at stones! Why?

On another occasion Tverdokhleb tried refusing to report for work assignment. He also went on a hunger strike—he was not going to work for Satan! Treating his declarations with contempt, they forcibly dragged him out. This took place in an ordinary hut, so that he was able to reach the windowpanes and break them. The jangle of breaking glass could be heard by the whole line-up, a dismal accompaniment to the voices of work assigners and warders counting.

To the droning monotony of our days, weeks, months, years.

And there was no ray of hope in sight. Rays of hope were not budgeted for in the MVD plan when these camps were set up.

Twenty-five of us newcomers, mostly Western Ukrainians, banded together in a work team and persuaded the work assigners to let us choose a foreman from our own number—Pavel Boronyuk, whom I have mentioned before. We made a well-behaved and hard-working team. (The Western Ukrainians, farm workers only yesterday and not in collectives, needed no urging on—at times they had to be reined in!) For some days we were regarded as general laborers, but then some of us turned out to be skilled bricklayers, others started learning from them, and so we became a building brigade. Our bricklaying went well. The bosses noticed it, took us off the housing project (building homes for free personnel), and kept us in the camp area. They showed our foreman the pile of stones by the Disciplinary Barracks—the same stones which Gershuni had tried to hang on to—and promised uninterrupted deliveries from the quarry. They explained that the Disciplinary Barracks as we saw it was only half a Disciplinary Barracks, that the other half must now be built onto it, and that this would be done by our team.

So, to our shame, we started building a prison for ourselves.

It was a long, dry autumn, not a drop of rain fell throughout

September and the first half of October. In the mornings it was calm, then the wind would rise, grow stronger by the middle of the day, and die away again toward evening. Sometimes this wind blew continuously, a thin, nagging wind which made you more painfully aware than ever of the heartbreaking flatness of the steppe, visible to us even from the scaffolding around the Disciplinary Barracks: neither the settlement with the first factory buildings, nor the hamlet where the guards lived, still less the wire fences around the camp, could conceal from us the endlessness, the boundlessness, the perfect flatness, and the hopelessness of that steppe, broken only by the first line of roughly barked telegraph poles running northeast to Pavlodar. Sometimes the wind freshened, and within an hour it would bring in cold weather from Siberia, forcing us to put on our padded jackets and whipping our faces unmercifully with the coarse sand and small stones which it swept along over the steppe. There is nothing for it; it will be simpler if I repeat the poem that I wrote at this time while I was helping to build the Disciplinary Barracks.

THE MASON

Like him of whom the poet sings, a mason, I
Tame the wild stones to make a jail. No city jail—
Here naught but fences, huts, and guard towers meets the eye,
And in the limpid sky the watchful buzzards sail.
None but the wind moves on the steppe—none to inquire
For whom I raise these walls . . . why dogs, machine guns, wire
Are still not jail enough. Trowel in hand, I too
Work thoughtlessly until—"The wall is out of true!
You'll be the first inside!" The major's easy jest
Adds naught to my fears. Informers have played their role.
My record is pocked like a face marked by black pest;
Neat brackets tie me to others bound for the hole.
Breaking, trimming, hammer to merry hammer calls.
Wall after gloomy wall springs up, walls within walls.
While we mix mortar we smoke, and await with delight—
Extra bread, extra slops in our basins tonight.
Back on our perch, we peer into cells walled with stones—
Black pits whose depths will muffle tortured comrades' groans.
Our jailers, like us, have no link with the world of men
But the endless road and the humming wires overhead. . . .
Oh, God, how lost we are, how impotent!
Was ever slave more abject, hope more dead!

Slaves! Not so much because, frightened by Major Maksimenko's threats, we took care to lay the stones crisscross, with an honest layer of mortar between them, so that future prisoners would not easily be able to pull that wall down. But because even though we somewhat underfulfilled our norm, our team of prison builders was issued with supplementary rations, and instead of flinging them in the major's face we ate them. Our comrade Volodya Gershuni was sitting at that very time in the completed wing of the Disciplinary Barracks. And Ivan Spassky, for no known offense, but because of some mysterious black mark on his record, was already in the punishment cells. And for many of us the future held a spell in that same Disciplinary Barracks, in the very cells which we were building with such precision and efficiency. During working hours, when we were nimbly handling stones and mortar, shots suddenly rang out over the steppe. Shortly after, a prison van drove up to the guardhouse, where we were (it was assigned to the guard unit, a genuine prison van such as you see in towns—but they hadn't painted "Drink Soviet Champagne" on its sides for the benefit of the gophers).* Four men were bundled out of the van, all of them battered and covered with blood. Two of them stumbled, one was pulled out; only the first out, Ivan Vorobyov, walked proudly and angrily.

They led the runaways past us, right under our feet, under the catwalks we stood on, and turned with them into the already completed right wing of the Disciplinary Barracks. . . .

While we . . . went on laying our stones.

Escape! What desperate courage it took! Without civilian clothes, without food, with empty hands, to cross the fence under fire and run into the bare, waterless, endless open steppe! It wasn't a rational idea—it was an act of defiance, a proud means of suicide. A form of resistance of which only the strongest and boldest among us were capable!

But we . . . went on laying our stones.

And talking it over. This was the second escape attempt in a month. The first had also failed—but that had been rather a silly one. Vasily Bryukhin (nicknamed "Blyuker"), Mutyanov the engineer, and another former Polish officer had dug a hole, one cubic meter in capacity, under the room in which they worked in the engineering shop, settled down in it with a stock of food, and covered themselves over. They naïvely expected that in the evening the guard would be taken off the working area as usual, and

that they would then be able to climb out and leave. But when at knocking-off time three men were missed, with no breaks in the wire to account for it, guards were left on duty round the clock for days. During this time people walked about over their heads, and dogs were brought in—but the men in hiding held petrol-soaked wadding by a crack in the floor to throw the dogs off the scent. Three days and nights they sat there without talking or stirring, with their legs and arms contorted and entwined, three of them in a space of one cubic meter, until at last they could stand it no longer and came out.

Other teams came back into the camp area and told us how Vorobyov's group had tried to escape: they had burst through the fences in a lorry.

Another week. We were still laying stones. The layout of the second wing of the Disciplinary Barracks was now clearly discernible—here would be the cozy little punishment cells, here the solitary-confinement cells, here the "box rooms." We had by now erected a huge quantity of stone in a little space, and they kept bringing more and more of it from the quarries: the stone cost nothing, labor in the quarries or on the site cost nothing; only the cement was an expense to the state.

The week went by, time enough for the four thousand of Ekibastuz to reflect that trying to escape was insanity, that it led nowhere. And—on another equally sunny day—shots rang out again on the steppe. An escape!!! It was like an epidemic: again the guard troops' van sped into the camp, bringing two of them (the third had been killed on the spot). These two—Batanov and another, a small, quite young man—were led past us, all bloody, to the completed wing, there to be beaten, stripped, tossed onto the bare floor, and left without food or drink. What are your feelings, slave, as you look upon them, mangled and proud? Surely not a mean satisfaction that it is not you who have been caught, not you who have been beaten up, not you who have been doomed.

"Get on with it—we've got to finish the left wing soon!" yells Maksimenko, our potbellied major.

And we . . . lay our stones. We shall get extra kasha in the evening.

Captain Second Class Burkovsky carries the mortar. Whatever is built, he thinks, is for the good of the Motherland.

In the evening we were told that Batanov, too, had tried to break out in a lorry. It had been stopped by gunfire.

Surely you have understood by now, you slaves, that running away is suicide, that no one will ever succeed in running farther than one kilometer, that your lot is to work and to die.

Less than five days later, no shots were heard—but it was as though the sky were of metal and someone was banging on it with a huge iron bar when the news came. An escape! Another escape!!! And this time a successful one.

The escape on Sunday, September 17, was executed so neatly that the evening inspection went off without trouble—as far as the screws could see, the numbers tallied. It was only on the morning of the eighteenth that their sums wouldn't work out right—and work line-up was canceled for a general recount. There were several inspections on the central tract, then inspections by huts, inspections by work teams, then a roll call from filing cards—the dogs couldn't count anything except the money in the till. They arrived at a different answer every time! They still didn't know *how many* had run away, who exactly, when, where to, and whether on foot or with a vehicle.

By now it was Monday evening, but they gave us no dinner (the cooks, too, had been turned out onto the central tract to help with the counting!), but we didn't mind. We were only too happy! Every successful escape is a great joy to other prisoners! However brutally the guards behave afterward, however harsh discipline becomes, we don't mind a bit, we're only too happy! What d'you think of that, you dogs! Some of us have escaped! (We look our masters in the eye, all the time secretly thinking: Let them not be caught! Let them not be caught!)

What is more, they didn't lead us out to work, and Monday went by like a second day off. (A good thing the lads hadn't legged it on Saturday! They'd taken care not to spoil our Sunday for us!)

But who were they? Who were they?

On Monday evening the news went round: Georgi Tenno and Kolya Zhdanok.

We built the prison higher. We had already made the straight arches over the doors, built above the little window spaces, and we were now leaving sockets for the beams.

Three days since they had escaped: Seven. Ten. Fifteen.

Still no news!

They had got away!!

Chapter 4

■

Why Did We Stand For It?

Among my readers there is a certain educated Marxist Historian. Sitting in his soft armchair, and leafing through this book to the passage about how we built the Disciplinary Barracks, he takes off his glasses, taps the page with something flat, a ruler perhaps, and nods his head repeatedly.

"Yes, yes . . . This bit I can believe. But all that stuff about the —er—whiff of revolution. I'll be damned if I do! You could not have a revolution, because revolutions take place in accordance with the laws of history. In your case all that had happened was that a few thousand so-called "politicals" were picked up—and did what? Deprived of human appearance, of dignity, family, freedom, clothing, food—what did you do? Why didn't you revolt?"

"We were earning our rations. I told you—building a prison."

"That's fine. Just what you should have been doing! It was for the good of the people. It was the only correct solution. But don't call yourselves revolutionaries, my friends! To make a revolution you must be linked with the one and only progressive class. . . ."

"Yes, but weren't we all workers by then?"

"That is neither here nor there. That is a philistine quibble. Have you any idea what historical necessity means?"

I rather think I have. I honestly have. I have an idea that when camps with millions of prisoners exist for forty years—that's where we can see historical necessity at work. So many millions, for so many years, cannot be explained by Stalin's vagaries or Beria's perfidy, by the naïve trustfulness of the ruling party, o'er

which the light of the Vanguard Doctrine never ceased to shine. But I won't cast *this* example of historical necessity in my opponent's teeth. He would only smile sweetly and tell me that that was not the subject under discussion, that I was straying from the point.

He sees that I am at a loss, that I have no clear conception of historical necessity, and explains:

"Those were revolutionaries, who rose up and swept Tsarism away with their broom. Very simple. If Tsar Nicky had so much as tried to squeeze his revolutionaries so hard! If he had just tried to pin numbers on them! If he had even tried . . ."

"You are right. He didn't try. He didn't try, and that's the only reason why they survived to try it when he had gone."

"But he *couldn't* try it! He couldn't!"

Probably also correct. Not that he might not have liked to—but that he couldn't.

In the conventional Cadet (let alone socialist) interpretation, the whole of Russian history is a succession of tyrannies. The Tatar tyranny. The tyranny of the Moscow princes. Five centuries of indigenous tyranny on the Oriental model, and of a social order firmly and frankly rooted in slavery. (Forget about the Assemblies of the Land,* the village commune, the free Cossacks, the free peasantry of the North.) Whether it is Ivan the Terrible, Alexis the Gentle, heavy-handed Peter, or velvety Catherine, all the Tsars right up to the Crimean War knew one thing only—how to *crush.* To crush their subjects like beetles or caterpillars. If a man was sentenced to hard labor and deportation, they pricked on his body the letters "SK"* and chained him to his wheelbarrow. The state bore hard on its subjects; it was unflinchingly firm. Mutinies and uprisings were invariably crushed.

Only . . . only . . . Crushed, yes, but the word needs qualification. Not crushed in our modern technical sense. After the war with Napoleon, when our army came back from Europe, the first breath of freedom passed over Russian society. Faint as it was, the Tsar had to reckon with it. The common soldiers, for instance, who took part in the Decembrist rising*—was a single one of them strung up? Was a single one shot? And in our day would a single one of them have been left alive? Neither Pushkin nor Lermontov could be simply put inside for a *tenner*—roundabout ways of dealing with them had to be found. "Where would you have been

in Petersburg on December 14?" Nicholas I asked Pushkin. Pushkin answered honestly, "On the Senate Square."* And by way of punishment . . . he was told to go home! Whereas all of us who have felt on our own hides the workings of a mechanized judicial system, and of course all our friends in public prosecutors' offices, know the proper price for Pushkin's answer: Article 58, Section 2 (armed insurrection), or—the mildest possible treatment—Article 19 (criminal intent)—and if not shooting, certainly nothing short of a *tenner. Our* Pushkins had heavy sentences slapped on them, went to the camps, and died. (Gumilyev never even got as far as a camp; they settled accounts with him in a cellar.)

Of all her wars, the Crimea was Russia's luckiest! It brought the emancipation of the peasants and Alexander's reforms, and what is more, the greatest of social forces—public opinion—appeared simultaneously in Russia.

On the face of it the Siberian *katorga* went on festering, and even spread: more transit prisons were brought into operation, prisoners were still transported in droves, courts were always in session. But what is this? The courts were in session but Vera Zasulich, who shot at the chief of police in the capital (!), was acquitted?!?

Seven attempts were made on the life of Alexander II himself (Karakozov's;[1] Solovyov's; one near Aleksandrovsk; one outside Kursk; Khalturin's explosion; Teterka's mine; Grinevitsky). Alexander II went around Petersburg with fear in his eyes (but, incidentally, without a bodyguard), "like a hunted animal" (according to Tolstoi, who met the Tsar on the staircase of a private house).[2] What did he do about it? Ruin and banish half Petersburg, as happened after Kirov's murder? You know very well that such a thing could never enter his head. Did he apply the methods of prophylactic mass terror? Total terror, as in 1918? Take *hostages?* The concept didn't exist. Imprison *dubious persons?* It simply wasn't possible. . . . Execute thousands? They executed . . . five. Fewer than three hundred were convicted by the courts in this period. (If just *one* such attempt had been made on Stalin,

1. Karakozov, incidentally, had a brother. Brother of the man who tried to shoot the Tsar! Measure that by our yardstick. What was his punishment? "He was ordered to change his name to Vladimirov." He suffered neither loss of property rights nor restrictions as to his place of residence.

2. *Lev Tolstoi v Vospominaniakh Sovremennikov (Lev Tolstoi Remembered by His Contemporaries),* Vol. 1, 1955, p. 180.

how many million lives would it have cost us?)

The Bolshevik Olminsky writes that in 1891 he was the only *political prisoner* in the whole Kresty Prison. Transferred to Moscow, he was the only one in the Taganka. It was only in the Butyrki, awaiting deportation, that a small party of them was assembled.

With every year of education and literary freedom the invisible but terrible power of public opinion grew, until the Tsars lost their grip on both reins and mane, and Nicholas II could only clutch at crupper and tail. It is true that the inertial undertow of dynastic tradition prevented him from understanding the demands of his age, and that he lacked the courage to act. In the age of airplanes and electricity he still lacked all social awareness, and thought of Russia as his own rich and richly variegated estate, in which to levy tribute, breed stallions, and raise armies for a bit of a war now and again with his imperial brother of the house of Hohenzollern. But neither he, nor any of those who governed for him, any longer had the will to fight for their power. They no longer crushed their enemies; they merely squeezed them gently and let them go. They were forever looking over their shoulders and straining their ears: what would public opinion say? They persecuted revolutionaries just sufficiently to broaden their circle of acquaintance in prisons, toughen them, and ring their heads with haloes. We now have an accurate yardstick to establish the scale of these phenomena—and we can safely say that the Tsarist government did not persecute revolutionaries but tenderly nurtured them, for its own destruction. The uncertainty, half-heartedness, and feebleness of the Tsarist government are obvious to all who have experienced an infallible judicial system.

Let us examine, for instance, some generally known biographical facts about Lenin. In spring, 1887, his brother was executed for an attempt on the life of Alexander III.[3] Like Karakozov's brother, Lenin was the brother of a would-be regicide. And what

3. It was incidentally established in the course of investigation that Anna Ulyanova had received a coded telegram from Vilna: "Sister dangerously ill," which meant "Weapons on the way." Anna was not surprised, although she had no sister in Vilna, and for some reason passed it on to Aleksandr; she was obviously his accomplice, and in our day she could have been sure of a *tenner*. But Anna was not even asked to account for it! In the same case it was established that another Anna (Serdyukova), a schoolteacher at Yekaterinodar, had direct knowledge of the planned attempt on the Tsar, and kept silent. What would have happened to her in our time? She would have been shot. And what did they give her? Two years . . .

happened to him? In the autumn of that very year Vladimir Ulyanov was admitted to the Imperial University at Kazan, and what is more, to the Law Faculty! Surprising, isn't it?

True, Vladimir Ulyanov was expelled from the university in the same academic year. But this was for organizing a student demonstration against the government. The younger brother of a would-be regicide inciting students to insubordination? What would he have got for that in our day? He would certainly have been shot! (And of the rest, some would have got twenty-five and others ten years.) Whereas he was merely expelled. Such cruelty! Yes, but he was also banished. . . . To Sakhalin?[4] No, to the family estate of Kokushkino, where he intended to spend the summer anyway. He wanted to work—so they gave him an opportunity. . . . To fell trees in the frozen north? No, to practice law in Samara, where he was simultaneously active in illegal political circles. After this he was allowed to take his examinations at St. Petersburg University as an external student. (With his curriculum vitae? What was the Special Section thinking of?)

Then a few years later this same young revolutionary was arrested for founding in the capital a "League of Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class"—no less! He had repeatedly made "seditious" speeches to workers, had written political leaflets. Was he tortured, starved? No, they created for him conditions conducive to intellectual work. In the Petersburg investigation prison, where he was held for a year, and where he was allowed to receive the dozens of books he needed, he wrote the greater part of *The Development of Capitalism in Russia,* and, moreover, forwarded—legally, through the Prosecutor's Office—his *Economic Essays* to the Marxist journal *Novoye Slovo.* While in prison, he followed a prescribed diet, could have dinners sent in at his own expense, buy milk, buy mineral water from a chemist's shop, and receive parcels from home three times a week. (Trotsky, too, was able to put the first draft of his theory of permanent revolution on paper in the Peter and Paul Fortress.)

But then, of course, he was condemned by a three-man tribunal and shot? No, he wasn't even jailed, only banished. To Yakutya, then, for life? No, to a land of plenty, Minusinsk, and for three years. He was taken there in handcuffs? In a prison train? Not at

4. There were, incidentally, political prisoners on Sakhalin. But, as it happened, not a single notable Bolshevik (or for that matter Menshevik) was ever there.

all! He traveled like a free man, went around Petersburg for three days without interference, then did the same in Moscow—he had to leave instructions for clandestine correspondence, establish connections, hold a conference of revolutionaries still at large. He was even allowed to go into exile at his own expense—that is, to travel with free passengers. Lenin never sampled a single convict train or a single transit prison on his way out to Siberia or, of course, on the return journey. Then, in Krasnoyarsk, two more months' work in the library saw *The Development of Capitalism* finished, and this book, written by a political exile, appeared in print without obstruction from the censorship. (Measure that by our yardstick!) But what would he live on in that remote village, where he would obviously find no work? He asked for an allowance from the state, and they paid him more than he needed. It would have been impossible to create better conditions than Lenin enjoyed in his one and only period of banishment. A healthy diet, at extremely low prices, plenty of meat (a sheep every week), milk, vegetables; he could hunt to his heart's content (when he was dissatisfied with his dog, friends seriously considered sending him one from Petersburg; when mosquitoes bit him while he was out hunting, he ordered kid gloves); he was cured of his gastric disorders and the other illnesses of his youth, and rapidly put on weight. He had no obligations, no work to do, no duties, nor did his womenfolk exert themselves; for two and a half rubles a month, a fifteen-year-old peasant girl did all the rough work about the house. Lenin had no need to write for money, turned down offers of paid work from Petersburg, and wrote only things which could bring him literary fame.

He served his term of banishment (he could have "escaped" without difficulty, but was too circumspect for that). Was his sentence automatically extended? Converted to deportation for life? How could it be—that would have been illegal. He was given permission to reside in Pskov, on condition that he did not visit the capital. He did visit Riga and Smolensk. He was not under surveillance. Then he and his friend (Martov) took a basket of forbidden literature to the capital, traveling via Tsarskoye Selo, where there were particularly strict controls (they had been too clever by half). He was picked up in Petersburg. True, he no longer had the basket, but he did have a letter to Plekhanov in invisible ink with the whole plan for launching *Iskra.** The police, though, could not put themselves to all that trouble; he was under arrest

and in a cell for three weeks, the letter was in their hands—and it remained undeciphered.

What was the result of this unauthorized absence from Pskov? Twenty years' hard labor, as it would have been in our time? No, just those three weeks under arrest! After which he was freed completely, to travel around Russia setting up distribution centers for *Iskra,* then abroad, to arrange publication ("the police see no objection" to granting him a passport for foreign travel!).

But this was the least of it! As an émigré he would send home to Russia an article on Marx for the *Granat Encyclopedia!* And it would be printed.[5] Nor was it the only one!

Finally, he carried on subversive activity from a little town in Austrian Poland, near the Russian frontier, but no one sent undercover thugs to abduct him and bring him back alive. Though it would have been the easiest thing in the world.

Tsardom was always weak and irresolute in pursuit of its enemies—you can trace the same pattern in the story of any important Social Democrat (Stalin in particular—though here suspicion of other contributory factors insinuates itself). Thus, in 1904 Kamenev's room in Moscow was searched and "compromising correspondence" was seized. Under interrogation he refused all explanation. And that was that. He was banished—to his parents' place of residence.

The SR's, it is true, were persecuted more severely. But how severely? Would you say that Gershuni (arrested in 1903) had no serious crimes to answer for? Or Savinkov (arrested in 1906)? They organized the assassination of some of the highest-placed people in the empire. Yet they were not executed. Then Mariya Spiridonova was allowed to escape. She shot General Luzhenovsky, who put down the peasant rising in Tambov, shot him point-blank, and once again they could not bring themselves to execute a terrorist, and only sent her to forced labor.[6] Just imagine what would have happened if a seventeen-year-old schoolgirl had shot the suppressor of the 1921 peasant rising (also in Tambov!) —how many *thousands* of high school pupils and intellectuals

5. Just imagine the *Bolshaya Entsiklopedia* publishing an émigré article on Berdyayev.

6. She was released from forced labor by the February Revolution. But then in 1918 she was arrested on a number of occasions by the Cheka. Like other socialists, she was shuffled, redealt, and finally discarded in the Great Game of Patience. She spent some time in exile in Samarkand, Tashkent, and Ufa. Afterward her trail is lost in one of the political "isolators." Somewhere or other she was shot.

would have been summarily shot without trial in the wave of "retaliatory" red terror?

Were people shot for the naval mutiny at Sveaborg? No, just exiled.

Ivanov-Razumnik recalls how students were punished (for the great demonstration in Petersburg in 1901). The scene in the Petersburg prison was like a student picnic—roars of laughter, community singing, students walking around freely from cell to cell. Ivanov-Razumnik even had the impertinence to ask the prison governor to let him attend a performance by the touring company of the Moscow Art Theatre, so as not to waste his ticket! Later he was sentenced to banishment—to Simferopol, which was his own choice, and he hiked all over the Crimea with a rucksack.

Ariadna Tyrkova writes about this period as follows: "We stuck to our principles, and the prison regime was not strict." Gendarme officers offered them meals from the best restaurant, Dodon's. According to the indefatigably curious Burtsev, "The Petersburg prisons were much more humane than those of Western Europe."

For calling on the Moscow workers to rise up in arms (!) and overthrow (!) the autocracy, Leonid Andreyev was . . . kept in a cell for fifteen whole days. (He himself thought it was rather little, and added three weeks in his own account.) Here are some entries in his diary at the time:[7] "Solitary confinement! Never mind, it's not so bad. I make my bed, pull up my stool and my lamp, put some cigarettes and a pear nearby. . . . I read, eat my pear—just like home. I feel merry. That's the word, merry." "Sir! Excuse me, sir!" The warder calls to him through the feeding hatch. Several books have arrived. And notes from neighboring cells.

Summing it up, Andreyev acknowledged that as far as board and lodging were concerned, he lived better in his cell than he had as a student.

At this very time Gorky was writing *Children of the Sun* in the Trubetskoi Bastion.

The Bolshevik elite published a pretty shameless piece of self-advertisement in the shape of Volume 41 of the *Granat Encyclopedia:* "Prominent Personalities of the U.S.S.R. and the October Revolution—Autobiographies and Biographies." Read whichever of them you like; you will be astounded to find how lightly by our standards they got away with their revolutionary activity. And, in

7. Quoted from V. L. Andreyev, *Detstvo (Childhood).*

particular, what favorable conditions they enjoyed in prison. Take Krasin, for instance: "he always remembered imprisonment in the Taganka with great pleasure. After the initial interrogations the gendarmes left him in peace" (why?), "and he devoted his involuntary leisure to unremitting toil: he learned German, read almost all the works of Schiller and Goethe in the original, acquainted himself with Schopenhauer and Kant, thoroughly studied Mill's *Logic* and Bundt's psychology," and so on. For his place of exile Krasin chose Irkutsk, the capital of Siberia and its most civilized town.

This is Radek, in prison in Warsaw in 1906. He "was in for half a year, of which he made splendid use, learning Russian, reading Lenin, Plekhanov, and Marx. While in prison, he wrote his first article [on the trade union movement] . . . and was terribly proud when he received [in jail] the issue of Kautsky's journal containing his contribution."

At the other extreme, Semashko's "imprisonment [Moscow, 1895] was unusually harsh": after three months in jail he was exiled for three years . . . to his native town, Yelets!

The reputation of the "terrible Russian Bastille" was created in the West by people demoralized by imprisonment, like Parvus, who wrote his highly colored, bombastic-sentimental reminiscences to avenge himself on Tsarism.

The same pattern can be traced in the experience of lesser personalities, in thousands of individual life stories.

I have on hand an encyclopedia, not the most obviously relevant, since it is the *Literary Encyclopedia,* and an old edition at that (1932), complete with "errors." Before someone eradicates these "errors" I will take the letter "K" at random.

Karpenko-Kary. While secretary to the city police (!) in Yelizavetgrad, provided passports for revolutionaries. (Translating as we go into our own language: an official in the passport section supplied an underground organization with passports!) Was he . . . hanged for it? No, banished for . . . 5 (five) years—to his own farm! In other words, to his country home. He became a writer.

Kirillov, V. T. Took part in the revolutionary movement of the Black Sea sailors. Shot? Hard labor for life? No; three years' banishment to Ust-Sysolsk. Became a writer.

Kasatkin, I. M. While in prison wrote stories which were published in newspapers! (In our time even ex-prisoners cannot get published.)

Karpov, Yevtikhi. After two (!) periods of banishment, was put in charge of the Imperial Aleksandrinsky Theatre and the Suvorin Theatre. (In our time he would never have obtained permission to reside in the capital, and in any case the Special Section would not have taken him on as a prompter.)

Krzhizhanovsky returned from banishment when the "Stolypin reaction"* was at its wildest and (while remaining a member of the underground Bolshevik Central Committee) took up his profession as an engineer without hindrance. (In our time he would have been lucky to find a job as mechanic in a Machine and Tractor Station!)

Although Krylenko hasn't got into the *Literary Encyclopedia,* it seems only right to mention him among the "K" 's. In all his years as a revolutionary hothead he three times "successfully avoided arrest"[8] and was six times arrested, but spent in all only fourteen months in prison. In 1907 (that year of reaction again) he was accused of agitation among the troops and participation in a military organization—and acquitted by the Military District Court (!). In 1915, for "evading military service" (he was an officer, and there was a war on), this future commander in chief (and murderer of his predecessor in that post) was punished by being . . . sent to a front-line (but not a punitive) unit. (This was how the Tsar's government proposed to damp down the fires of revolution while simultaneously defeating the Germans. . . .) And for fifteen years it was under the shadow of his unclipped procuratorial wing that the endless lines of those condemned in countless trials shuffled through the courts to receive their bullet in the back of the head.

During the Stolypin reaction again, V. A. Staroselsky, governor of Kutaisi, who unhesitatingly supplied revolutionaries with passports and arms, and betrayed the plans of the police and the government forces to them, got away with something like two weeks' imprisonment.[9]

Translate that into our language, if you have imagination enough!

During this same "reactionary" phase the Bolshevik philosophical and political journal *Mysl* was *legally* published. And the

8. This and what follows is taken from his autobiography in the *Granat Encyclopedia,* Vol. 41, pp. 237–245.

9. "Tovarishch Gubernator" ("Comrade Governor"), *Novy Mir,* 1966, No. 2.

"reactionary" *Vekhi* openly wrote about the "obsolete autocracy," "the evils of despotism and slavery"—fine, keep it up; we don't mind a bit!

The severity of those times was beyond human endurance. V. K. Yanovsky, an art photographer in Yalta, made a sketch showing the shooting of the Ochakov sailors and exhibited it in his shopwindow (much as if someone nowadays had exhibited episodes from the punitive operation at Novocherkassk* in a window on Kuznetsky Most). And what did the Yalta police chief do? Because Livadia* was so near he behaved with particular cruelty. He began by shouting at Yanovsky. And he went on to destroy . . . not Yanovsky's studio—oh, dear, no—not the sketch of the shooting, but . . . a copy of the sketch. (Some will explain this by Yanovsky's sleight of hand. But let us note that the governor did not order the window to be broken in his presence.) Thirdly, a very heavy penalty was inflicted on Yanovsky himself: as long as he continued to reside in Yalta he must not appear in the street . . . while the imperial family was passing through.

Burtsev, in an émigré journal, went so far as to cast aspersions on the private life of the Tsar. When he returned to the Motherland (on the flood tide of patriotism in 1914)—was he shot? He spent less than a year in prison, with permission to receive books and to carry on his literary pursuits.

No one stayed the axman's hand. And in the end the tree would fall.

When Tukhachevsky was "repressed," as they call it, not only was his immediate family broken up and imprisoned (it hardly needs to be said that his daughter was expelled from her institute), but his two brothers and their wives, his four sisters and their husbands, were all arrested, while all his nephews and nieces were scattered about various orphanages and their surnames changed to Tomashevich, Rostov, etc. His wife was shot in a camp in Kazakhstan, his mother begged for alms on the streets of Astrakhan and died there.[10] Similar stories can be told about the relatives of hundreds of other eminent victims. That is real persecution!

The most important special feature of persecution (if you can

10. I cite this example in sympathy for his innocent relatives. Tukhachevsky himself is becoming the object of a new cult, to which I do not intend to subscribe. What he reaped, he had sown when he directed the suppression of the Kronstadt rising and of the peasant rising in Tambov.

call it that) in Tsarist times was perhaps just this: that the revolutionary's relatives never suffered in the least. Natalya Sedova (Trotsky's wife) returned to Russia without hindrance in 1907, when Trotsky was a condemned criminal. Any member of the Ulyanov family (though nearly all of them were arrested at one time or another) could readily obtain permission to go abroad at any moment. When Lenin was on the "wanted" list for his exhortations to armed uprising, his sister Anna legally and regularly transferred money to his account with the Crédit Lyonnais in Paris. Both Lenin's mother and Krupskaya's mother as long as they lived received state pensions for their deceased husbands—one a high-ranking civil servant, the other an army officer—and it would have been unthinkable to make life hard for them.

Such were the circumstances in which Tolstoi came to believe that only moral self-improvement was necessary, not political freedom.

Of course, no one is in need of freedom if he already has it. We can agree with him that political freedom is not what matters in the end. The goal of human evolution is not freedom for the sake of freedom. Nor is it the building of an ideal polity. What matter, of course, are the moral foundations of society. But that is in the long run: what about the beginning? What about the first step? Yasnaya Polyana in those days was an open club for thinkers. But if it had been blockaded as Akhmatova's apartment was when every visitor was asked for his passport, if Tolstoi had been pressed as hard as we all were in Stalin's time, when three men feared to come together under one roof, even he would have demanded political freedom.

At the most dreadful moment of the Stolypin terror the liberal newspaper *Rus* was allowed to report, in bold type on its front page: "Five executions!" "Twenty executed at Kherson!" Tolstoi broke down and wept, said that he couldn't go on living, that it was *impossible* to imagine anything *more horrible.*[11]

Then there is the previously mentioned list in *Byloye:* 950 executions in six months.[12]

Let us take this issue of *Byloye.* Note that it appeared well within the eight-month period of Stolypin's "military justice" (August, 1906—April, 1907), and that the list was compiled from

11. *Tolstoy v Vospominaniakh Sovremennikov,* Vol. II, 1955, p. 232.
12. *Byloye,* No. 2/14, February, 1907.

data published by Russian news agencies. Much as though the Moscow papers in 1937 had given lists of those shot, which were then collated and republished, with the NKVD tamely turning a blind eye.

Secondly, this eight-month period of martial justice, which had no precedent and was not repeated in Tsarist Russia, could not be prolonged because the "impotent" and "docile" State Duma would not ratify such measures (indeed, Stolypin did not venture to submit them to the Duma for discussion).

Thirdly, the events during the previous six months invoked in justification of "military law" included the "murder of innumerable police officers for political motives," "many attacks on officials,"[13] and the explosion on Aptekarsky Island. If, it was argued, "the state does not put a stop to these terrorist acts then it will forfeit its right to exist." So Stolypin's ministry, impatient and angry with the jury courts and their leisurely inconsequences, their powerful and uninhibited bar (not a bit like our oblast courts or district tribunals, obedient to a telephone call), snatched at a chance to curb the revolutionaries (and also straightforward bandits, who shot at the windows of passenger trains and killed ordinary citizens for a few rubles) by means of the laconic court-martial. (Even so there were restrictions: a court-martial could be set up *only* in places in which martial law or a state of emergency had been declared; it convened only when the evidence of crime was fresh, not more than twenty-four hours after the event, and when a crime had manifestly been committed.)

If contemporaries were stunned and shocked, it was obviously because this was something new to Russia!

In the 1906–1907 situation we see that the revolutionaries must take their share of the blame for the "Stolypin terror," as well as the government. A hundred years after the birth of revolutionary terror, we can say without hesitation that the terrorist idea and terrorist actions were a hideous mistake on the part of the revolutionaries and a disaster for Russia, bringing her nothing but confusion, grief, and inordinate human losses.

Let us turn over a few more pages in the same number of *Byloye*.[14] Here is one of the earliest proclamations, dating from 1862, which were the start of it all.

13. The article in *Byloye* cited above does not deny these facts.
14. *Byloye*, 2/14, p. 82.

"What is it that we want? The good, the happiness of Russia. Achieving a new life, a better life, without casualties is impossible, because we cannot afford delay—we need speedy, immediate reform!"

What a false path! They, the zealots, could not afford to wait, and so they sanctioned human sacrifice (of others, not themselves) to bring universal happiness nearer! They could not afford to wait, and so we, their great-grandsons, are not at the same point as they were (when the peasants were freed), but much farther behind.

Let us admit that the terrorists were worthy partners of Stolypin's courts-martial.

What for us makes comparison between the Stolypin and the Stalin periods impossible is that in our time the barbarity was all on one side: heads were cut off for a sigh or for less than a sigh.[15]

"Nothing more horrible!" exclaimed Tolstoi. It is, however, very easy to imagine things more horrible. It is more horrible when executions take place not from time to time, and in one particular city of which everybody knows, but *everywhere* and *every day;* and not twenty but two hundred at a time, with the newspapers saying nothing about it in print big or small, but saying instead that "life has become better, life has become more cheerful."

They bash your face in, and say it was always ugly.

No, things weren't the same! Not at all the same, although the Russian state even then was considered the most oppressive in Europe.

The twenties and thirties of our century have deepened man's understanding of the possible degrees of *compression.* The terrestrial dust, the earth which seemed to our ancestors as compact as may be, is now seen by physicists as a sieve full of holes. An isolated speck in a hundred meters of emptiness—that is a model of the atom. They have discovered the nightmarish possibility of "atom packing"—forcing all the tiny nuclear specks from all those hundred-meter vacuums together. A thimbleful of such packing weighs as much as a normal locomotive. But even this packing is too much like fluff: the protons prevent you from compressing the nuclei as tight as you could wish. If you could compress neutrons

15. I state with confidence that our age has also surpassed that of the Tsars in the scale and technical level of its summary punitive operations. (Suppression of peasant revolt in 1918–1919; Tambov rising, 1921; Kuban and Kazakhstan, 1930.)

alone, a postage stamp made of such "neutron packing" would weigh five million tons!

And that is how tightly they squeezed us, without any help from pioneering physicists!

Through Stalin's lips our country was bidden henceforth to *renounce complacency.* But under the word used for complacency Dal* gives "kindness of heart, a loving state of mind, charity, a concern for the general good." That was what we were called upon to renounce, and we did so in a hurry—renounced all concern for the general good! Henceforth our own feeding trough was enough for us!

Russian public opinion by the beginning of the century constituted a marvelous force, was creating a climate of freedom. The defeat of Tsarism came not when Kolchak was routed, not when the February Revolution was raging, but much earlier! It was overthrown without hope of restoration once Russian literature adopted the convention that anyone who depicted a gendarme or policeman with any hint of sympathy was a lickspittle and a reactionary thug; when you didn't have to shake a policeman's hand, cultivate his acquaintance, nod to him in the street, but merely brush sleeves with him in passing to consider yourself disgraced.

Whereas we have butchers who—because they are now redundant and because their qualifications are right—are in charge of literature and culture. They order us to extol *them* as legendary heroes. And to do so is for some reason called . . . patriotism.

Public opinion! I don't know how sociologists define it, but it seems obvious to me that it can only consist of interacting individual opinions, freely expressed and independent of government or party opinion.

So long as there is no independent public opinion in our country, there is no guarantee that the extermination of millions and millions for no good reason will not happen again, that it will not begin any night—perhaps this very night.

The Vanguard Doctrine, as we have seen, gave us no protection against this plague.

But I can see my opponent pulling faces, winking at me, wagging his head. In the first place, *the enemy may overhear me.* And secondly, why such a broad treatment of the subject? The question was posed much more narrowly. It was not why were we jailed?

Nor why did those who remained *free* tolerate this lawlessness? Everyone knows that they didn't *realize* what was going on, that they simply *believed* (the party)[16] that if whole peoples are banished in the space of twenty-four hours, those peoples must be guilty. The question is a different one: Why did we in the camps, where we *did* realize what was going on, suffer hunger, bend our backs, put up with it all, instead of fighting back? The others, who had never marched under escort, who had the free use of their arms and legs, could be forgiven for not fighting—they couldn't, after all, sacrifice their families, their positions, their wages, their authors' fees. They're making up for it now by publishing critical reflections in which they reproach us for clinging to our rations instead of fighting, when we had nothing to lose.

But I have all along been leading up to my answer to this question. The reason why we put up with it all in the camps is that there was no public opinion *outside.*

What conceivable ways has the prisoner of resisting the regime to which he is subjected? Obviously, they are:

1. Protest.
2. Hunger strike.
3. Escape.
4. Mutiny.

So, then, it is *obvious to anybody,* as the Great Deceased liked to say (and if it isn't, we'll ram it into him), that if the first two have some force (and if the jailers fear them), it is *only* because of public opinion! Without that behind us we can protest and fast as much as we like and they will laugh in our faces!

It is a very dramatic way of obtaining your demands—standing before the prison authorities and tearing open your shirt, as Dzerzhinsky did. But only where public opinion exists. Without it—you'll be gagged with the tatters and pay for a government-issue shirt into the bargain!

Let me remind you of a celebrated event which took place in the Kara hard-labor prison at the end of the last century. Political prisoners were informed that in future they would be liable to corporal punishment. Nadezhda Sigida was due to be thrashed first (she had slapped the commandant's face . . . to force him to resign!). She took poison and died rather than

16. V. Yermilov's answer to I. Ehrenburg.

submit to the birch. Three other women then poisoned themselves—and also died! In the men's barracks fourteen prisoners volunteered to commit suicide, though not all of them succeeded.[17] As a result, corporal punishment was abolished outright and forever! The prisoners had counted on frightening the prison authorities. For news of the tragedy at Kara would reach Russia, and the whole world.

But if we measure this case against our own experience, we shall shed only tears of scorn. Smack the commandant's face? For an injury inflicted on *someone else?* And what is so terrible about a few thwacks across the backside? You'll go on living! And why did her women friends take poison, too? And why fourteen men besides? We are only given one life! We must make the best of it! As long as we get food and drink, why part with life? Besides, maybe there will be an amnesty, maybe they'll start giving us good conduct marks.

You see from what a lofty plane prison behavior has declined. And how low we have fallen. And how by the same token our jailers have risen in the world! No, these are not the bumpkins of Kara! Even if we had plucked up our courage and risen above ourselves—four women and fourteen men—we should all have been shot before we got at any poison. (Where, in any case, would it come from in a Soviet prison?) If you did manage to poison yourself, you would only make the task of the authorities easier. And the rest would be treated to a dose of the birch for not denouncing you. And needless to say, no word of the occurrence would ever leak through the boundary wires.

This is the point, this is where their power lies: no news could leak out. If some muffled rumor did, with no confirmation from newspapers, with informers busily nosing it out, it would not get far enough to matter: there would be no outburst of public indignation. So what is there to fear? So why

17. We may note here some significant details from E. N. Kovalskaya, *Zhenskaya Katorga (Women Political Prisoners),* Gosizdat, 1920, pp. 8–9; and G. F. Osmolovsky, *Karilskaya Tragedia (The Tragedy at Kara),* Moscow, 1920. Sigida struck and spat on an officer for absolutely no reason, because of the "neurotic atmosphere" among political prisoners. After this the gendarme officer (Masyukov) *asked a political prisoner* (Osmolovsky) *to interrogate him.* The governor of the prison (Bobrovsky) *died repentant,* and would not even accept consolation from the priest. (If only we had had jailers with consciences like these!) Sigida was beaten with her clothes on, and Kovalskaya's dress was changed by other women, and not, as rumor had it, in the presence of men.

should they lend an ear to our *protests?* If you want to poison yourselves—get on with it.

The hopelessness of our hunger strikes has been sufficiently shown in Part I.

Escape, then? History has preserved for us accounts of some major escapes from Tsarist prisons. All of them, let us note, were engineered and directed *from outside*—by other revolutionaries, Party comrades of the escapers, with incidental help from many sympathizers. Many people were involved in the escape itself, in concealing the escapers afterward, and in slipping them across the frontier. ("Aha!" My Marxist Historian has caught me out here. "That was because the population sided with the revolutionaries, and because the future belonged to them!" "Perhaps also," I humbly reply, "because it was all a jolly game, and a legal one? Fluttering your handkerchief from a window, letting a runaway share your bedroom, helping him with his disguise? These were not indictable offenses. When Pyotr Lavrov ran away from his place of banishment, the governor of Vologda [Khominsky] gave his civil-law wife permission to leave and catch up with her man. . . . Even for forging passports you could just be rusticated to your own farm, as we saw. People *were not afraid*—do you know, from your own experience, what that means? While I think of it, how is it that *you* were never *inside?*" "Well, you know, it was all a *lottery.* . . .")

There is, however, evidence of another kind. We were all made to read Gorky's *Mother* at school, and some of you may remember the account of conditions in the Nizhni Novgorod jail: the warders had rusty pistols with which they would knock nails into the walls, and there was no difficulty at all in placing a ladder against the prison wall and calmly discharging yourself. The high police official Ratayev writes as follows: "Banishment existed only on paper. Prison didn't exist at all. Prison conditions at that time were such that a revolutionary who landed in prison could continue his former activities without hindrance. . . . The Kiev revolutionary committee were all in jail together, and while there directed a strike in the city and issued appeals."[18]

18. Letter from L. A. Ratayev to P. N. Zuyev in *Byloye,* No. 2/24, 1917. Ratayev goes on to speak of the general situation in Russia, *outside.* "Secret agents and free-lance detectives didn't exist anywhere [except in the two capitals—A.S.]. Surveillance was carried out if absolutely necessary by noncommissioned gendarme officers in disguise, who sometimes forgot to remove their spurs when they put on civilian clothes. . . . In these

I have at present no access to information about security at the principal locations of the Tsarist *katorga*; but if escape from them was ever as desperately difficult as it was from their Soviet counterparts, with one chance in 100,000 of success, I have never heard it. There was obviously no reason for prisoners to take great risks: they were not threatened with premature death from exhaustion by hard labor, nor with extensions of sentence which they had done nothing to deserve: the second half of their term they served not in prison but in places of banishment, and they usually put off escapes till then.

Laziness would seem to be the only reason for not escaping from Tsarist places of banishment. Evidently, exiles reported to the police infrequently, surveillance was poor, there were no secret police posts along the roads, you were not tied to your work day in and day out by police supervision; you had money (or it could be sent to you), and places of banishment were not remote from the great rivers and roads; again, no threat hung over anyone who helped a runaway, nor indeed was the runaway himself in danger of being shot by his pursuer, or savagely beaten, or sentenced to twenty-five years' hard labor, as in our day. A recaptured prisoner was usually reinstalled in his previous place, to complete his previous sentence. And that was all. You couldn't lose. Fastenko's departure abroad (Part I, Chapter 5) is typical of such ventures. But perhaps the Anarchist A. P. Ulanovsky's escape from the Turukhan region is even more so. In the course of his escape it was enough for him to look in at a student reading room and ask for Mikhailovsky's *What Is Progress?* and the students gave him a meal, a bed, and his fare. He escaped abroad by simply walking up the gangway of a foreign ship—no MVD patrol there, of course!—and finding a warm spot in the stokehold. More wonderful yet, during the 1914 war he voluntarily returned to Russia and to his place of banishment in Turukhan. Obviously a foreign spy! Shoot him! Come on, you reptile, tell us whose pay you're in! Well,

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circumstances a revolutionary only had to transfer his activities outside the capitals . . . and they would remain an impenetrable secret for the department of police. In this way real nests of revolution and hotbeds of propaganda and agitation were created. . . ."

Our readers will readily grasp the difference between this and the Soviet period. Igor Sazonov, waiting his chance to kill Minister Plehve, disguised himself as a cabby and, with a bomb hidden in his droshky, stood outside the *main entrance of the police department* (!!) for a whole day—and no one took any notice of him or asked him what he was doing! Kalyaev, still inexperienced, spent a whole day on tenterhooks near Plehve's house on the Fontanka, fully expecting to be arrested—and no one touched him! . . . Golden days! . . . In such conditions revolution was easy.

no. For three years' absence abroad the magistrate ordered him to pay a fine of three rubles, or spend one day in the cells! Three rubles was a lot of money, and Ulanovsky preferred one day in detention.

Beginning with attempts to escape from Solovki by sea in some flimsy little boat, or in a hold among the timber, and ending with the insane, hopeless, suicidal breakouts from the camps in the late Stalin period (some later chapters are devoted to them), escape in our time has always been an enterprise for giants among men, but for doomed giants. Such daring, such ingenuity, such will power never went into prerevolutionary escape attempts—yet they were very often successful, and ours hardly ever.

"Because your attempts to escape were essentially reactionary in their class character! . . ."

Can a man's urge to stop being a slave and an animal ever be reactionary?

The reason for their failure was that success depends in the later stages of the attempt on the attitude of the population. And our population was *afraid* to help escapers, or even *betrayed* them, for mercenary or ideological reasons.

"So much for public opinion! . . ."

As for prison mutinies, involving as many as three, five, or eight thousand men—the history of our three revolutions knew nothing of them.

Yet we did.

But the same curse was upon them, and very great efforts, very great sacrifices, produced the most trivial results.

Because society was not ready. Because without a response from public opinion, a mutiny even in a huge camp has no scope for development.

So that when we are asked: "Why did you put up with it?" it is time to answer: "But we didn't!" Read on and you will see that we didn't put up with it at all.

In the Special Camps we raised the banner of the *politicals*—and politicals we became.

Chapter 5

■

Poetry Under a Tombstone, Truth Under a Stone

At the beginning of my camp career I was very anxious to avoid general duties, but did not know how. When I arrived at Ekibastuz in the sixth year of my imprisonment I had changed completely, and set out at once to cleanse my mind of the camp prejudices, intrigues, and schemes, which leave it no time for deeper matters. So that instead of resigning myself to the grueling existence of a general laborer until I was lucky enough to become a trusty, as educated people usually have to, I resolved to acquire a skill, there and then, in *katorga.* When we joined Boronyuk's team (Oleg Ivanov and I), a suitable trade (that of bricklayer) came our way. Later my fortunes took a different turn and I was for some time a smelter.

I was anxious and unsure of myself to begin with. Could I keep it up? We were unhandy cerebral creatures, and the same amount of work was harder for us than for our teammates. But the day when I deliberately let myself sink to the bottom and felt it firm under my feet—the hard, rocky bottom which is the same for all —was the beginning of the most important years in my life, the years which put the finishing touches to my character. From then onward there seem to have been no upheavals in my life, and I have been faithful to the views and habits acquired at that time.

I needed an unmuddled mind because I had been trying to write a poem for two years past. This was very rewarding, in that it helped me not to notice what was being done with my body. Sometimes in a sullen work party with Tommy-gunners barking

about me, lines and images crowded in so urgently that I felt myself borne through the air, overleaping the column in my hurry to reach the work site and find a corner to write. At such moments I was both free and happy.[1]

But how could I *write* in a Special Camp? Korolenko tells us that he wrote in jail—but how different his conditions were! He wrote in pencil (why didn't they feel the seams of his clothes and take it away from him?), which he had carried in among his curls (and why wasn't his hair cropped?), wrote among all the noise (he ought to have been thankful that there was room to sit down and stretch his legs!). Indeed, he was so privileged that he could keep manuscripts or send them out (and that is hardest of all for our contemporaries to understand!).

You can't write like that nowadays, even in the camps! (Even saving names for a future novel was dangerous—the membership list of some organization, perhaps? I used to jot down only the etymological root, in the form of a common noun or an adjectival derivative.) Memory was the only hidey-hole in which you could keep what you had written and carry it through all the searches and journeys under escort. In the early days I had little confidence in the powers of memory and decided therefore to write in verse. It was of course an abuse of the genre. I discovered later that prose, too, can be quite satisfactorily tamped down into the deep hidden layers of what we carry in our head. No longer burdened with frivolous and superfluous knowledge, a prisoner's memory is astonishingly capacious, and can expand indefinitely. We have too little faith in memory!

But before you commit something to memory you feel a need to write it down and improve it on paper. In the camps you are allowed to have a pencil and clean paper but may not keep anything *in writing* (unless it is a poem about Stalin).[2] And unless you get a trusty's job in the Medical Section or sponge on the Culture and Education Section, you have to go through the morning and

1. Everything is relative! We read of Vasily Kurochkin that the nine years of his life after *Iskra* was closed down were "years of real agony": he was left without a press organ of his own! We who dare not even dream of an organ of our own find him incomprehensible: he had a room, quiet, a desk, ink, paper, there were no body searches, and nobody confiscated what he had written—why, then, the agony?

2. Dyakov describes one instance of such "artistic activity." Dmitrievsky and Chetverikov outlined a projected novel to the authorities and obtained their approval. The security officer saw to it that they were not put on general duties! Later on they were secretly taken out of the camp area ("in case the Banderists tore them to pieces") to continue their work: More poetry under the gravestone. But where *is* the novel?

evening searches at the guardhouse. I decided to write snatches of twelve to twenty lines at a time, polish them, learn them by heart, and burn them. I made it a firm rule not to content myself with tearing up the paper.

In prisons the composition and polishing of verses had to be done in my head. Then I started breaking matches into little pieces and arranging them on my cigarette case in two rows (of ten each, one representing units and the other tens). As I recited the verses to myself, I displaced one bit of broken match from the units row for every line. When I had shifted ten units I displaced one of the "tens." (Even this work had to be done circumspectly: such innocent match games, accompanied by whispering movements of the lips or an unusual facial expression, would have aroused the suspicion of stool pigeons. I tried to look as if I was switching the matches around quite absent-mindedly.) Every fiftieth and every hundredth line I memorized with special care, to help me keep count. Once a month I recited all that I had written. If the wrong line came out in place of one of the hundreds or fifties, I went over it all again and again until I caught the slippery fugitives.

In the Kuibyshev Transit Prison I saw Catholics (Lithuanians) busy making themselves rosaries for prison use. They made them by soaking bread, kneading beads from it, coloring them (black ones with burnt rubber, white ones with tooth powder, red ones with red germicide), stringing them while still moist on several strands of thread twisted together and thoroughly soaped, and letting them dry on the window ledge. I joined them and said that I, too, wanted to say my prayers with a rosary but that in my particular religion I needed one hundred beads in a ring (later, when I realized that twenty would suffice, and indeed be more convenient, I made them myself from cork), that every tenth bead must be cubic, not spherical, and that the fiftieth and the hundredth beads must be distinguishable at a touch. The Lithuanians were amazed by my religious zeal (the most devout among them had no more than forty beads), but with true brotherly love helped me to put together a rosary such as I had described, making the hundredth bead in the form of a dark red heart. I never afterward parted with this marvelous present of theirs; I fingered and counted my beads inside my wide mittens—at work line-up, on the march to and from work, at all waiting times; I could do it standing up, and freezing cold was no hindrance. I carried it safely through the search points, in the padding of my mittens, where

it could not be felt. The warders found it on various occasions, but supposed that it was for praying and let me keep it. Until the end of my sentence (by which time I had accumulated 12,000 lines) and after that in my place of banishment, this necklace helped me to write and remember.

Even so, things were not so simple. The more you have written, the more days in each month are consumed by recitation. And the particularly harmful thing about these recitals is that you cease to see clearly what you have written, cease to notice the strong and weak points. The first draft, which in any case you approve in a hurry, so that you can burn it, remains the only one. You cannot allow yourself the luxury of putting it aside for years, forgetting it and then looking at it with a fresh critical eye. For this reason, you can never write really well.

Nor can you hang on to unburned scraps of paper for long. Three times I was caught, and was saved only because I never wrote the most dangerous names in full, but put dashes in their place. Once I was lying on the grass away from everyone else, too near the boundary wire (it was quieter there), and writing, concealing my scrap of paper in a book. Senior Warder Tatarin crept up behind me very quietly and saw that I was not reading, but writing.

"Right, let's have it!" I rose, in a cold sweat, and handed it over. These lines were written on it:

> All we have lost will be made good—
> None of our claims will be denied us.
> The Osterode-Brodnitsy route
> Was five weary days and nights on foot
> With an [escort] of K[azakhs] and T[atars] beside us. . . .

If the words "escort" and "Tatars" had been written in full, Tatarin would have hauled me before the security officer and they would have found me out. But the blanks told him nothing.

> With an ——— of K—— and T—— beside us. . . .

Our minds were running on different lines. I was afraid for the poem, and he had thought that I was making a sketch of the camp area and plotting escape. Still, even what he did find he read with a frown. Certain words seemed to him suggestive. But what really set his brain working furiously was the phrase "five weary days." I had overlooked its possible associations! "Five days" was a set

formula in the camp, when prisoners were consigned to the hole.

"Who gets five days? Who's this all about?" he asked, looking black.

I barely managed to convince him (by pointing to the names Osterode and Brodnitsy) that I was trying to remember an army song someone had written, but couldn't recall all the words.

"Why do you want to do that? You aren't here to remember things!" was his surly warning. "If I catch you lying here again, you're in for it!"

When I talk about this incident now, it sounds trivial. But at the time, for a wretched slave like myself, it was an enormous event: I could never again lie on the grass away from all the noise, and if Tatarin caught me with any more verses, they might easily open a new file on me and put me under close surveillance.

But I could not stop writing now!

On another occasion I broke my usual rule. At the work site I wrote down sixty lines of a play[3] at one go, and failed to conceal this piece of paper at the camp entrance. True, I had again left a number of discreet blanks. The warder, a simple, flat-nosed young fellow, examined his catch with some surprise.

"A letter?" he asked.

(A letter taken to the work site had a whiff of the black hole about it. But it would seem a mighty strange letter if they passed it on to the security officer!)

"It's for a concert," I said, brazening it out. "I'm trying to write down a sketch from memory. Come and see it when we put it on."

The young man stared and stared at the paper, and at me, then said:

"You're a bigger fool than you look!"

And he ripped my page into two, four, eight pieces. I was terrified that he would throw the scraps, which were still large, on the ground there in front of the guardhouse, where they might catch the eye of a more vigilant staff member. Chief Disciplinary Officer Machekhovsky himself was only a few steps away, looking on while we were searched. But they evidently had orders not to leave litter by the guardhouse, or they would have to tidy it up themselves, and the warder put the torn-up pieces into my hand as though it were a refuse bin. I went through the gates and made haste to throw them into the stove.

3. *Pir Pobeditelei (Feast of the Victors).*

On a third occasion, while I still had a sizable piece of a poem unburned, I was working on the Disciplinary Barracks and the temptation to put "The Mason" on paper was too strong for me. At that time we never left the camp area, so that we did not undergo daily personal searches. When "The Mason" was three days old, I went out in the dark, before evening inspection, to go over it for the last time and then burn it at once. I was looking for a quiet, lonely spot, which meant somewhere toward the boundary fence, and I forgot entirely that I was near the place where Tenno had recently gone under the wire. A warder who had evidently been lying in ambush grabbed me immediately by the scruff of my neck and marched me through the darkness to the black hole. I took advantage of the darkness to crumple "The Mason" surreptitiously and toss it at random behind me. A breeze was beginning to blow and the warder did not hear the paper crackling and rustling.

I had quite forgotten that I still had another fragment of a poem on me. They found it when they searched me in the Disciplinary Barracks; fortunately it contained almost nothing that could incriminate me (it was a descriptive section from *Prussian Nights*).

The duty officer, a perfectly literate senior sergeant, read it through.

"What's this?"

"Tvardovsky," I answered unhesitatingly. *Vasily Tyorkin.**

(This was where Tvardovsky's path and mine first crossed!)

"Tvardo-ovsky!" said the sergeant, nodding his head respectfully. "And what do you want it for?"

"Well, there aren't any books. I write down what I can remember and read it sometimes."

They took my weapon—half a razor blade—from me, but returned the poem, and they would have let me go (I wanted to run and find "The Mason"). But by then evening inspection was over and no one was allowed to move about the camp. The warder took me back to the hut and locked me in himself.

I slept badly that night. A gale-force wind had sprung up outside. Where would it carry the little ball of paper with "The Mason" on it? In spite of all the blanks, the sense of the poem remained obvious. And it was clear from the text that its author was in the team building the Disciplinary Barracks. Among all those Western Ukrainians it wouldn't be hard to find me.

So that the work of many years—that already done, and that I was planning—was a scrap of crumpled paper blown helplessly about the camp or over the steppe. I could only pray. When things are bad, we are not ashamed of our God. We are only ashamed of Him when things go well.

At five in the morning, as soon as we rose, I went to the spot, gasping for breath in the wind. It was so strong that it swept up small stones and hurled them in your face. It was a waste of time even looking! From where I was, the wind was blowing in the direction of the staff barracks, then the punishment cells (this place, too, was infested with warders, and there was a lot of tangled barbed wire), then beyond the camp limits, on to the street of the settlement. I prowled around, bent double, for an hour before dawn, and found nothing. By now I was in despair. Then when it got light . . . I saw something white three steps from the place where I had thrown it! The wind had rolled the ball of paper to one side and it had lodged among a pile of boards.

I still consider it a miracle.

So I went on writing. In winter in the warming-up shack, in spring and summer on the scaffolding at the building site: in the interval between two barrowloads of mortar I would put my bit of paper on the bricks and (without letting my neighbors see what I was doing) write down with a pencil stub the verses which had rushed into my head while I was slapping on the last hodful. I lived in a dream, sat in the mess hall over the ritual gruel sometimes not even noticing its taste, deaf to those around me—feeling my way about my verses and trimming them to fit like bricks in a wall. I was searched, and counted, and herded over the steppe —and all the time I saw the sets for my play, the color of the curtains, the placing of the furniture, the spotlights, every movement of the actors across the stage.

Some of the lads broke through the wire in a lorry, others crawled under it, others walked up a snowdrift and over it—but for me the wire might not have existed; all this time I was making my own long and distant escape journey, and this was something the warders could not discover when they counted heads.

I realized that I was not the only one, that I was party to a great secret, a secret maturing in other lonely breasts like mine on the scattered islands of the Archipelago, to reveal itself in years to come, perhaps when we were dead, and to merge into the Russian literature of the future.

(In 1956 I read the first small collection of Varlam Shalamov's poems in samizdat, which existed even then, and trembled as though I had met a long-lost brother. Here he declares his willingness to die like Archimedes during the siege of Syracuse:

> I know, none better, this is not a game—
> Or else a deadly game. But like the sage
> I'll welcome death rather than drop my pen,
> Rather than crumple my half-written page.

He, too, wrote in a camp. Keeping his secret from all around, like me expecting no answer to his lonely cry in the dark:

> A long, long row of lonely graves
> Are all I remember now.
> And I should have laid myself there,
> Laid my bare body down there,
> Had I not taken a vow:
> To sing and to weep to the very end
> And never to heed the pain,
> As though in the heart of a dead man
> Life yet could begin again.

How many of us were there? Many more, I think, than have come to the surface in the intervening years. Not all of them were to survive. Some buried manuscripts in bottles, without telling anyone where. Some put their work in careless or, on the contrary, in excessively cautious hands for safekeeping. Some could not write their work down in time.

Even on the isle of Ekibastuz, could we really get to know each other? encourage each other? support each other? Like wolves, we hid from everyone, and that meant from each other, too. Yet even so I was to discover a few others in Ekibastuz.

Meeting the religious poet Anatoly Vasilyevich Silin was a surprise which I owed to the Baptists. He was then over forty. There was nothing at all remarkable about his face. A reddish fuzz had grown in place of his cropped hair and beard, and his eyebrows were also reddish. Day in and day out he was meek and gentle with everyone, but reserved. Only when we began talking to each other freely, and strolling about the camp for hours at a stretch on our Sundays off, while he recited his very long religious poems to me (like me, he had written them right there in the camp), I was startled not for the first time or the last to realize what far

from ordinary souls are concealed within deceptively ordinary exteriors.

A homeless child, brought up an atheist in a children's home, he had come across some religious books in a German prisoner-of-war camp, and had been carried away by them. From then on he was not only a believer, but a philosopher and theologian! "From then on" he had also been in prison or in camps without a break, and so had spent his whole theological career in isolation, rediscovering for himself things already discovered by others, perhaps going astray, since he had never had either books or advisers. Now he was working as a manual laborer and ditchdigger, struggling to fulfill an impossible norm, returning from work with bent knees and trembling hands—but night and day the poems, which he composed from end to end without writing a word down, in iambic tetrameters with an irregular rhyme scheme, went round and round in his head. He must have known some twenty thousand lines by that time. He, too, had a utilitarian attitude to them: they were a way of remembering and of transmitting thoughts.

His sensitive response to the riches of nature lent warmth and beauty to his view of the world. Bending over one of the rare blades of grass which grew illegally in our barren camp, he exclaimed:

"How beautiful are the grasses of the earth! But even these the Creator has given to man for a carpet under his feet. How much more beautiful, then, must we be than they!"

"But what about 'Love not this world and the things that are of this world'?" (A saying which the sectarians often repeated.)

He smiled apologetically. He could disarm anyone with that smile.

"Why, even earthly, carnal love is a manifestation of a lofty aspiration to Union!"

His theodicy, that is to say his justification of the existence of evil in the world, he formulated like this:

> Does God, who is Perfect Love, allow
> This imperfection in our lives?
> The soul must suffer first, to know
> The perfect bliss of paradise. . . .

Harsh is the law, but to obey
Is for weak men the only way
To win eternal peace.

Christ's sufferings in the flesh he daringly explained not only by the need to atone for human sins, but also by God's desire to *feel* earthly suffering to the full.

"God always *knew* these sufferings, but never before had he *felt* them," Silin boldly asserted. Even of the Antichrist, who had

Corrupted man's Free Will—perverted
His yearning toward the One True Light

Silin found something fresh and humane to say:

The bliss that God had given him
That angel haughtily rejected:
He nothing knew of human pain;
He loved not with the love of men—
By grief alone is love perfected.

Thinking so freely himself, Silin found a warm place in his generous heart for all shades of Christian belief.

This is the crux:
That though Christ's teaching is its theme
Genius must ever speak with its own voice.

The atheist's impatient refusal to believe that spirit could beget matter only made Silin smile.

"Why don't they ask themselves how crude matter could beget spirit? That way round, it would surely be a miracle. Yes, a still greater miracle!"

My brain was full of my own verses, and these fragments are all that I have succeeded in preserving of the poems I heard from Silin—fearing perhaps that he himself would preserve nothing. In one of his poems, his favorite hero, whose ancient Greek name I have forgotten, delivered an imaginary speech at the General Assembly of the United Nations—a spiritual program for all mankind. A doomed and exhausted slave, with four number patches on his clothes, this poet had more in his heart to say to living human beings than the whole tribe of hacks firmly established in journals, in publishing houses, in radio—and of no use to anyone except themselves.

Before the war Anatoly Vasilyevich had graduated from a teachers' college, where he had specialized in literature. Like me, he now had about three years left before his "release" to a place of banishment. His only training was as a teacher of literature in schools. It seemed rather improbable that ex-prisoners like us would be allowed into schools. But if we were—what then?

"I won't put lies into children's heads! I shall tell the children the truth about God and the life of the Spirit."

"But they'll take you away after the first lesson."

Silin lowered his head and answered quietly: "Let them."

And it was obvious that he would not falter. He would not play the hypocrite just to go on handling a class register rather than a pickax.

I looked with pity and admiration at this unprepossessing man with ginger hair, who had known neither parents nor spiritual directors, for whom life was no harder in Ekibastuz, turning over the stony soil with a spade, than it always had been elsewhere.

Silin ate from the same pot as the Baptists, shared his bread and warm victuals with them. Of course, he needed appreciative listeners, people with whom he could join in reading and interpreting the Gospel, and in concealing the little book itself. But Orthodox Christians he either did not seek out (suspecting that they would reject him as a heretic), or did not find: there were few of them in our camp except for the Western Ukrainians, or else they were no more consistent in their conduct than others, and so inconspicuous. The Baptists, however, seemed to respect Silin, listened to him; they even considered him one of their own: but they, too, disliked all that was heretical in him, and hoped in time to bend him to their ways. Silin was subdued when he talked to me in their presence, and blossomed out when they were not there—it was difficult for him to force himself into their mold, though their faith was firm, pure, and ardent, helping them to endure *katorga* without wavering, and without spiritual collapse. They were all honest, free from anger, hard-working, quick to help others, devoted to Christ.

That is why they are being rooted out with such determination. In the years 1948–1950 several hundred of them were sentenced to twenty-five years' imprisonment and dispatched to Special

Camps *for no other reason* than that they belonged to Baptist communes (a commune is of course an *organization*).[4]

■

The camp is different from the Great Outside. Outside, everyone uninhibitedly tries to express and emphasize his personality in his outward behavior. In prison, on the contrary, all are depersonalized—identical haircuts, identical fuzz on their cheeks, identical caps, identical padded jackets. The face presents an image of the soul distorted by wind and sun and dirt and heavy toil. Discerning the light of the soul beneath this depersonalized and degraded exterior is an acquired skill.

But the sparks of the spirit cannot be kept from spreading, breaking through to each other. Like recognizes and is gathered to like in a manner none can explain.

You can understand a man better and more quickly if you know at least a fragment of his biography. Here are some trench diggers working side by side. Thick, soft snow has begun to fall. Perhaps because it is time for a break, the whole team goes into the dugout for shelter. But one man remains standing outside. At the edge of the trench, he leans on his spade and stands quite motionless, as though he found it comfortable, or as though he were a statue.

The snowflakes gathering on his head, shoulders, and arms make him still more like a statue. Doesn't he care? Does he even like it? He stares through the flurry of snowflakes—at the camp, at the white steppe. He has broad bones, broad shoulders, a broad face, with a growth of stiff blond bristles. He is always deliberate, slow-moving, very calm. He remains standing there—looking at the world and thinking. He is elsewhere.

I do not know him, but his friend Redkin tells me his story. This man is a Tolstoyan. He grew up with the antiquated notion that a man may not kill (even in the name of the Vanguard Doctrine!) and must not, therefore, take up arms. In 1941 he was called up. Near Kushka, to which he had been posted, he threw his gun away and crossed the Afghan border. There were no Germans around Kushka and none were expected, so that he could have had a quiet

4. The persecution became less severe in the Khrushchev period only in that shorter sentences were given: otherwise it was just as bad. (See Part VII.)

war, never shooting at a living thing, but even lugging that piece of iron around on his back went against his convictions. He supposed that the Afghans would respect his right not to kill people and let him go through to India, where there was religious tolerance. But the Afghan government turned out to be as cynically self-interested as governments always are. Fearing the wrath of its all-powerful neighbor, it put the runaway in the stocks. And kept him in prison, with his legs cramped in the stocks, unable to move, for three years, waiting to see which side would win. The Soviets did—and the Afghans obligingly returned the deserter to them. His present sentence was reckoned only from that date.

Now he stood motionless out in the snow, like part of the landscape. Had he been brought into the world by the state? Why, then, had the state usurped the right to decide how this man should live?

We don't mind having a fellow countryman called Lev Tolstoi. It's a good trademark. (Even makes a good postage stamp.) Foreigners can be taken on trips to Yasnaya Polyana. We are always ready to drool over his opposition to Tsarism and his excommunication (the announcer's voice will tremble at this point). But, my dear countrymen, if someone takes Tolstoi seriously, if a real live Tolstoyan springs up among us—hey, look out there! Mind you don't fall under our caterpillar tracks!

. . . Perhaps on the building site you run and ask the foreman, a prisoner, for his folding ruler, to measure how much wall you've laid. He sets great store by this ruler, and doesn't know you by sight—there are so many teams on the job—but for some reason he hands you his treasure without demur (sheer stupidity, to the camp-trained mind). And when you actually return the ruler to him, *he* will thank *you* very warmly. How can such a weird character be a foreman in a camp? He has an accent. Ah, yes—he turns out to be a Pole, his name is Jerzy Wegierski. You will hear more of him.

. . . Perhaps you are marching along in the column, and you ought to be telling your beads inside your mitten, or thinking about your next stanzas—but you find yourself very much interested by your neighbor in the ranks, a new face. (They have just sent a new brigade to your work site.) An elderly, likable Jewish intellectual with a mocking, intelligent expression. His name is Masamed, and he is a university graduate. From . . . ? Bucharest, Faculty of Biology and Psychology. He is, among other things, a physiognomist and graphologist. Moreover, he is a yogi, and will

start you on a course in Hatha Yoga tomorrow. (That's the pity of it: our term in this university is so short! I can never get my breath! There's no time to take it all in.)

Later on I took a good look at him in the work zone and the living area. His fellow countrymen had offered to fix him up with an office job, but he wouldn't take it: it was important to him to show that Jews, too, make excellent general laborers. So at the age of fifty he fearlessly wields his pickax. Like a true yogi, he really is master of his own body: at minus 10 degrees Centigrade he strips and asks his workmates to hose him down from the fire hydrant. Unlike the rest of us, who shovel that wretched gruel into our mouths as fast as we can, he eats slowly, with concentration, looking away from his plate, swallowing a little at a time from a tiny spoon of his own.[5]

It does happen, and not so very rarely, that you make an interesting new acquaintance on the way to or from work. But you can't always get going in the column: with the guards shouting, and your neighbors hissing ("because of you . . . us as well . . ."), on the way to work you're too sluggish, and on the way back in too much of a hurry, and very likely there's a wind to shut your gob. Yet suddenly . . . well, of course these are untypical cases, as the socialist realists say. Quite exceptional cases.

In the outermost line walks a little man with a thick black beard (because he had it when he was last arrested, and was photographed with it, it has not been shaved off in the camp). He walks briskly, very much on his dignity, carrying a carefully tied roll of draftsman's paper under his arm. This is a "rationalization proposal" or invention of his, some new thing of which he is proud. He drew it at work, brought it to show to somebody in the camp, and is now taking it with him back to work. Suddenly a mischievous wind plucks the roll from under his arm and bowls it along away from the column. Arnold Rappoport (the reader already knows him) instinctively takes a step in pursuit of it, a second, a third . . . but the roll drifts on farther, between two guards, beyond the escort! This is where Rappoport should stop—"One step to right or left," remember, "and you get it without warning." But that's mine, my drawing, it's over there! And Arnold trots after it, bending forward, arms extended—an evil fate is carrying off his idea! Arnold reaches out eagerly, his hands rake the air. Barbar-

5. Nonetheless, he was to die soon, like an ordinary mortal, of an ordinary heart attack.

ian! Don't touch my blueprints! The column sees him, stumbles to a halt of its own accord. Guns are pointed, bolts click back! . . . Everything so far was typical, but now came something untypical: no one acted like a fool! No one fired! The barbarians realized that this was not an escape! Even to their befuddled brains this was an immediately comprehensible scene: the author pursuing his fleeing creation! Rappoport ran on another fifteen paces or so beyond the escort guards, caught his roll, straightened up, and returned to the ranks very pleased with himself. Returned . . . from the next world.

Although Rappoport had landed more than the average camp stint (after a kid's sentence and a *tenner* had come banishment, and now he was doing another *tenner*), he was full of life, agile, bright-eyed—and those eyes of his, although they were always merry, were made for suffering, were very expressive eyes. It was a matter of pride to him that years of prison had not aged and broken him. As an engineer, he had, however, always worked as a trusty on some production job, so that it was easy for him to keep his spirits up. He took a lively interest in his work, but over and beyond it he created for his soul's sake.

He was one of those versatile characters eager to embrace everything. At one time he was thinking of writing a book like this of mine, all about the camps, but he never got around to it. Another of his works made us, his friends, laugh: Arnold had for some years been patiently compiling a universal technical reference book, which would cover all the ramifications of modern science and technology (everything from types of radio valves to the average weight of elephants), and which was to be . . . pocket-size. The wiser for this laughter, Arnold showed me another of his favorite works in secret. Finding Stendhal's treatise *On Love* completely unsatisfactory, he had written a new one, in a glossy black exercise book. It consisted of unpolished, and for the present disconnected, remarks. For a man who had spent half his life in the camps, how chaste it all was! Here are some brief extracts.[6]

To possess a woman without love is the unhappy lot of the poor in body and spirit. Yet men boast of it as a "conquest."

Possession, without the preliminary organic development of feeling, brings not joy but shame and revulsion. The men of our age, who devote all their energy to making money, to their jobs, to the exercise of power,

6. This was all many years ago. Rappoport later abandoned his treatise, and I have his permission to quote it.

have lost the gene of higher love. On the other hand, woman's unerring instinct tells her that possession is only the first stage toward genuine intimacy. Only after it does a woman acknowledge a man as near and dear, and show it in her way of speaking to him. Even a woman who gives herself unintentionally feels an access of grateful tenderness.

Jealousy is injured self-esteem. Real love, unrequited, is not jealous but dies, ossifies.

Love, as much as science, art, and religion, is a mode of cognition.

Combining as he did such very different interests, Arnold Lvovich naturally knew the most various people. He introduced me to a man whom I should have passed by without noticing: at first sight he was just another of the walking dead, doomed to die of malnutrition, with collarbones sticking out from his unbuttoned camp jacket like those of a corpse. His lankiness made him even more astonishingly thin. He was naturally swarthy, and his shaven head had become still darker in the Kazakh sun. He still dragged himself out of the camp to work, still clung to his barrow to stay on his feet. He was a Greek and, once more, a poet! Yet another! A volume of his verse in modern Greek had been published in Athens. But since he was not an Athenian but a Soviet prisoner (and a Soviet citizen), our newspapers shed no tears for him.

He was only middle-aged, although so close to death. I made pitifully clumsy attempts to wave these thoughts away. He laughed wisely, and explained to me in imperfect Russian that not death itself, but only the moral preparation for it, holds terrors. He had finished with fear and grief and regret, shed all his tears, already lived through his inevitable death and was quite ready. It only remained for his body to finish dying.

So many people turn out to be poets! It's almost unbelievable. (Sometimes I was at a loss to understand it.) While the Greek waits to die, here are two young men waiting only for the end of their sentence and for future literary fame. They are poets—openly, without concealment. What they have in common is a certain radiant purity. Both are students who never graduated. Kolya Borovikov, an admirer of Pisarev (and therefore an enemy of Pushkin), works as a clinical orderly in the Medical Section. Yurochka Kireyev, from Tver, who admires Blok, and himself writes in the manner of Blok, goes out of camp to work in the office of the engineering shop. His friends (and what strange friends they are for him—twenty years older and fathers of families) tease him about the time in a Corrective Labor Camp up north when some

generally available Rumanian woman offered herself to him, but he didn't understand and wrote sonnets to her. If you look at his innocent face you can very easily believe it. Now his virginity is a curse and a burden to be carried all through the camps!

. . . Sometimes people catch your eye, sometimes you catch theirs. In the big chaotic barracks where four hundred men live, moving restlessly around or lying on their bunks, I read after supper and during the tedious inspections the second volume of Dal's dictionary—the only book which I had brought as far as Ekibastuz, where I was forced to see it defaced with a stamp saying "Steplag, Culture and Education Section." I never flipped through the pages, because in the fag end of the evening I could hardly read through half a page. So I sat, or shuffled along for the inspection, engrossed in one particular passage. I was used to newcomers' asking what that fat book was, and wondering why the devil I wanted to read it. I used to answer with a joke. "It's the safest thing to read. No danger of catching a new sentence."[7]

But that book brought me a lot of interesting acquaintances, too. For instance, a small man like a bantam cock, with a fierce nose and a sharp mocking look, comes up to me and says in a singsong northern accent:

"May I inquire what book you have there?"

We exchange a few words and then as Sunday follows Sunday, as month follows month, in this one man a microcosm in which half a century of my country's history is densely packed opens out before me. Vasily Grigoryevich Vlasov (the one who was in the Kady trial,* and has now got through fourteen long years of his twenty) thinks of himself as an economist and politician, and has no idea that he is an artist in words—in the spoken word. Whether he tells me about haymaking or merchants' shops (he had worked in one as a boy), a Red Army unit or an old country house, an executioner from the Provincial Deserter Interception Organization or an insatiable woman in some small town, I see it all in the

7. But what is it *not* dangerous to read in a Special Camp? Aleksandr Stotik, an economist in the Dzhezkazgan Camp Division, used to read an adaptation of *The Gadfly* in the evening on the quiet. In spite of his secrecy he was denounced. The camp commander himself, and a pack of officers, came to join in the search. "Waiting for the Americans?" They made him read aloud in English. "How much longer are you in for now?" "Two years." "Make it twenty!" They also found some verses. "Interested in love, are you? . . . Make him so uncomfortable that not only his English but even his Russian will evaporate!" (What's more, the slavish trusties hissed at Stotik: "You'll land us in it, too! They'll drive us all back to work again.")

round and absorb it as thoroughly as if it had been part of my own experience. I wanted to write it all down at once—but it couldn't be done. I wish I could remember it word for word ten years later, but it is impossible.

I noticed that one man often stole glances at me and my book, but hesitated to start a conversation—a thin, fine-drawn, long-nosed young man whose politeness, diffidence even, seemed strange in those surroundings. I got to know him, too. He spoke in a quiet, shy voice, groping for words in Russian, and making hilarious mistakes, which he immediately redeemed with a smile. It emerged that he was Hungarian, and his name was Janos Rozsas. He nodded when I showed him Dal's dictionary, with my eyes on his shriveled, camp-worn face. "Yes, yes," he said, "a man must distract his attention to other things, not think about food all the time." He was only twenty-five, but there was no youthful flush in his cheeks; the dry, papery skin, made transparent by the winds, seemed to be stretched over the long, narrow bones of his skull with no flesh between. His joints ached—he had caught rheumatic fever, felling trees in the north.

There were two or three of his compatriots in the camp, but all day and every day they were obsessed with one thought only—how to survive and how to eat their fill. Whereas Janos ate whatever the foreman obtained for him, and even though he remained hungry, he made it a rule not to look for more. He was all eyes and ears; he wanted to understand. Understand what, you ask? . . . Us. He wanted to understand us Russians!

"My personal fate became very uninteresting when I got to know people here. I am most extremely surprised. They loved their own people, and for that they get *katorga.* But I think—this is wartime muddle, yes?" (He asks this in 1951! If it was still a wartime muddle then, maybe it dated from the First World War? . . .)

In 1944, when our troops captured him in Hungary, he was eighteen (and not in the army). "I had still had no time to do people either good or evil," he said, with a smile. "People had seen neither profit nor harm from me." Janos's interrogation went like this: the interrogator didn't understand a word of Hungarian, nor Janos a word of Russian. Occasionally some very bad interpreters came along, Carpathian Ukrainians. Janos signed a sixteen-page statement, with no idea what was in it. Nor, when an unknown officer read him something from a piece of paper, did he realize

that this was the Special Board's sentence.[8] They sent him to the North, to fell trees, and there he *went under* and landed in the hospital.

Till then Russia had shown him only one side of herself (the part used for sitting on), but now she turned the other. In the camp hospital at the Symsk Separate Camp Site near Solikamsk there was a forty-five-year-old nurse called Dusya. She was a nonpolitical offender, not a part of the professional underworld, was in for five years, and had a pass. Her job as she saw it was not just to grab all she could and get through her sentence (a very common assumption in the camps, though Janos with his rosy view of things did not know it), but to look after these useless, dying people. What the hospital gave was not enough to save them. So Dusya used to exchange her morning ration of 300 grams for half a liter of milk in the village, and with this milk she nursed Janos back to life (as she had nursed others before him).[9] For this motherly woman's sake Janos came to love Russia and all Russians. He started diligently learning, there in the camp, the language of his warders and convoy guards, the great, the mighty Russian language. He spent nine years in our camps, and saw nothing of Russia except from prison trains, on little picture postcards, and in the camp. Yet he loved it.

Janos belonged to a breed which is steadily becoming rarer in our time: those whose only passion in childhood is reading. He kept this inclination as an adult, and even in the camps. In the north, and in the Ekibastuz Special Camp, he missed no opportunity to obtain and read new books. By the time I met him he already knew and loved Pushkin, Nekrasov, and Gogol. I explained Griboyedov to him. But more than anyone else, more perhaps than even Petöfi and Arany, he came to love Lermontov, whom he had first read in captivity, not long before.[10] Janos identified himself particularly with Mtsyri*—like himself a prisoner,

8. It is said that when Janos was rehabilitated after Stalin's death, curiosity prompted him to ask for a copy of the sentence in Hungarian, so that he could find out just why he had spent nine years in prison. But he was afraid to do so. "They may wonder what I want to do with it. And anyway, I don't really need it all that much. . . ." He had understood our way of thinking: why, indeed, did he need to know now? . . .

9. Can someone explain to me what ideology this behavior fits into? (Compare the Communist medical orderly in Dyakov: "Toothache, eh, you pig-faced Ukrainian bandit!")

10. I have been told more than once by foreigners that Lermontov is dearer to them than any other Russian poet. After all, they point out, Pushkin did write "To Russia's Slanderers." Whereas Lermontov never did Tsarism the smallest service.

young and doomed. He had much of it by heart, and for years on end, as he dragged himself along with his hands behind his back, in a column of foreigners through an alien land, he would murmur to himself in the strangers' tongue:

I knew then in my troubled mind
My eager foot would no more find
The native land I'd left behind.

Friendly, affectionate, with vulnerable pale-blue eyes—that was Janos Rozsas in our heartless camp. He would perch on my bunk, lightly, on the very edge, as though my sack of sawdust could be made any dirtier, or would lose its shape under his weight, and say in a low voice full of genuine feeling:

"With whom should I share my secret dreams?"

He never complained about anything.[11]

You move among the camp population as you would through a minefield, photographing each of them with the rays of intuition for fear of blowing yourself up. Yet in spite of this general rule of caution, how often I discovered a poetic personality under a zek's shaven skull and black jacket.

How many others kept their secret to themselves?

How many more—surely a thousand times as many—did not come my way at all?

11. All the Hungarians were allowed to go home after Stalin's death, so Janos escaped the fate of Mtsyri, for which he was fully prepared.

Twelve years have passed, 1956 among them. Janos is a bookkeeper in the little town of Nagy Kanizsa, where nobody knows Russian or reads Russian books. And what does he now write to me?

"After all that has happened, I can sincerely say that I would not give back my past. I learned in a harsh school what others can never know. . . . When I was freed I promised the comrades who stayed behind that I would never forget the Russian people, not for their sufferings but for their good hearts. Why do I follow newspaper reports about my former "motherland" with such interest? The works of the Russian classics are a whole shelf in my library, I have forty-one volumes in Russian and four in Ukrainian (Shevchenko). . . . Other people read the Russians as they read the English or the Germans, but I read them differently. To me Tolstoi is closer than Thomas Mann, and Lermontov much closer than Goethe.

"You cannot guess how much I miss Russia without talking about it. Sometimes people ask me what kind of crank I am, what good did the place ever do me, why do I feel drawn to Russians? How can I explain that all my youth went by there, and that life is an eternal farewell from the swiftly passing days. . . . How could I turn my back like a sulky child —for nine years my fate coincided with yours. How can I explain why my heart misses a beat when I hear a Russian folk song on the radio? I start singing to myself under my breath. 'See the reckless troika speeding . . .' But it is too painful for me to go on. My children ask me to teach them Russian. Wait awhile, children; for whom do you think I collect Russian books?"

And how many, in those decades, did you smother, infamous Leviathan?

■

Ekibastuz also had an official, though very dangerous, center for cultural intercourse—the Culture and Education Section, where they stamped black words on books and freshened up our numbers.

An important and very colorful figure in our CES was Vladimir Rudchuk, now an artist, but formerly an archdeacon, and possibly even personal secretary to the Patriarch. There is somewhere in the camp rules an unexpunged proviso that persons in holy orders shall not be shorn. Of course, this rule is never made public, and priests who do not know of it are shorn. But Rudchuk knew his rights, and he was left with wavy auburn locks, unusually long for a man. He took great care of them, and of his appearance generally. He was tall, well-made, attractive, with a pleasant bass voice, and it was easy to imagine him conducting a solemn service in a huge cathedral. Drozdov, the churchwarden who arrived at Ekibastuz with me, recognized the Archdeacon at once: he had formerly served in the cathedral church at Odessa.

Here in the camp he neither looked nor lived like a man of our convict world. He was one of those dubious personages who had insinuated themselves, or been insinuated, into the Orthodox Church as soon as they were no longer in official disfavor: They did much to bring the Church into disrepute. The story of how Rudchuk came to be in jail was also rather mysterious: for some reason he kept exhibiting a photograph (inexplicably left in his possession) of himself with Anastasi, the Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile, on a New York street. He had a *cabin* to himself in the camp. When he got back from work line-up, where he disdainfully painted the numbers on our caps, jackets, and trousers, he would spend the day in idleness, occasionally making crude copies of tasteless pictures. He was allowed to keep a volume of reproductions from the Tretyakov Gallery, and it was because of these that I found my way to him: I wanted to take another look, perhaps my last. He had the *Bulletin of the Moscow Patriarchate* sent to him in the camp, and sometimes discoursed pompously on the great martyrs, or on details of the

liturgy, but it was all affectation, all insincere. He also had a guitar, and the only thing he ever did sincerely was to sing, in a pleasant voice, to his own accompaniment. Even then his writhing was intended to suggest that he was haloed with a convict's crown of sorrow.

The better a man lives in the camp, the more exquisite his suffering. . . .

I was cautious to the nth degree in those days. I never called on Rudchuk again, I told him nothing about myself, and as a harmless insignificant worm escaped his sharp eye. Rudchuk's eye was the eye of the MGB.

Anyway, every old hand in the camps knew that any CES was riddled with informers, and the least suitable place imaginable to seek new acquaintances and company. In mixed Corrective Labor Camps the CES attracted prisoners as a meeting place for men and women. But in *katorga,* what reason could there be for going there?

It turned out that even a CES in *katorga* (full of informers though it was) could serve the cause of freedom. I learned this from Georgi Tenno, Pyotr Kishkin, and Zhenya Nikishin.

It was in the CES that I met Tenno, and that single brief meeting stayed clearly in my mind because Tenno himself was so memorable. He was a tall, slender man of athletic build. For some reason, they still hadn't stripped him of his naval tunic and breeches (some prisoners were wearing their own clothes for one last month). And although instead of the shoulder tabs of a captain second class he wore in various places the number SKh 520, he was every inch the naval officer, ready to step aboard at any moment. When his movements bared his arms above the wrists you saw little reddish hairs and tattoo marks: on one arm the word "Liberty" around an anchor, on the other "Do or die" [in English]. Tenno simply could not lower his lids or squint, to hide the sharpness of his eyes and the pride in them. And another thing he could not hide was his big, bright smile. (I did not yet know it, but that smile meant: My plan of escape is drawn up!)

That's the camp for you—a minefield! Tenno and I were both there, yet elsewhere: I was on the roads of East Prussia,* he on the route of his next escape. Each of us was charged with secret thoughts, but as we shook hands and exchanged casual words, not the smallest spark could leap from palm to palm or eye to eye! We said something unimportant, I buried myself in my newspaper,

and he began discussing amateur performances with Tumarenko, a political in for fifteen years, but nonetheless in charge of the CES, a complicated man of many layers: I thought I knew the answer to him, but had no means of verifying it.

Ridiculous as it may seem, in *katorga* there was also a concert group attached to the CES, or rather in process of formation! Membership conferred none of the privileges of such groups in Corrective Labor Camps, exempted a man from nothing, so that only incurable enthusiasts would ever want to join. Among them, it appeared, was Tenno, though from his looks you would have thought better of him. Besides, he had been in the punishment cells ever since his arrival in Ekibastuz—it was from there that he had volunteered for the CES! The authorities interpreted this as an earnest of amendment and permitted him to attend. . . .

Petya Kishkin was no CES activist but the most famous man in the camp. All Ekibastuz knew of him. Any work site was proud to have him—with Kishkin around, no one could be bored. He appeared to be crazy, and was anything but. Though he acted the fool, everybody said, "He's cleverer than the lot of us." He was the same sort of fool as the "simple" youngest brother in a fairy tale! The Kishkins are a phenomenon of great antiquity in Russia: they loudly tell the truth to the wicked and powerful, they make the people see themselves as they are, and all this by foolery which involves no risk to themselves.

One of his favorite turns was dressing like a clown in a funny green waistcoat and collecting the dirty bowls from the tables. This in itself was a demonstration: the most popular man in the camp gathering dirty dishes so as not to die of hunger. A second reason for doing it was that while he was jigging and clowning around the tables, always the center of attention, he rubbed shoulders with the working convicts and sowed mutinous thoughts.

He would suddenly snatch a bowl from the table with the mush yet untouched—the prisoner was still only sipping his broth. The startled prisoner would grab at the bowl and Kishkin would dissolve in smiles (he had a moon face, but with a certain hardness in it): "Till somebody touches your mush, you never grasp anything."

And he dances lightly away with his mountain of dishes.

Before the day is out, Kishkin's latest joke will be going the rounds in other work teams, too.

Another time he leans out across the table, and the rest all look up at him from their plates. Rolling his eyes like a toy cat, with a buffoonish look on his face, Kishkin says:

"Listen, lads! If the father's a fool and the mother a whore, will the children be fed or go hungry?"

Without waiting for the obvious answer, he points at the litter of fish bones on the table, and says:

"Divide seven to eight billion poods per annum by two hundred million!"

And off he goes. It was so simple—why had none of us thought of it before? It had been reported long ago that we were harvesting eight billion poods of grain a year, which meant two kilograms of bread a day for everyone, including babes in arms. Right, we're grown men, making holes in the ground the whole day long—where's our share?

Kishkin varied his material. Sometimes he would put the same thought the other way around—with a lecture on anything and everything. When the column was waiting before the guardhouse, at the camp or the work site, and talking was allowed, he made use of the time to harangue us. One of his regular slogans was "Educate your faces!" "I walk around the camp and I look at you: you all have such uneducated faces. Can't think of anything except their barley cake."

Or he would suddenly, for no obvious reason, shout at a crowd of zeks: "Dardanelle! Tommyrot!" It seemed to make no sense. But after one or two shouts everybody clearly understood *who* "Dardanelle" was, and it seemed so apt and so funny that you almost saw the menacing mustache on his face. "Dardanelle!"

One of the bosses barks at Kishkin outside the guardhouse, trying to get a rise out of him for a change. "How come you're baldheaded, Kishkin, you so-and-so? Got dry rot, have you?" Without a minute's hesitation, Kishkin answered so that all the crowd could hear: "Is that what made Vladimir Ilyich bald, then?"

Or he might go around the mess hut announcing that after the dishes had been collected he would teach the goners* to do the Charleston.

Suddenly—a great surprise. A film had arrived. It was shown in the evening, in the same old mess hut, without a screen, on the whitewashed wall. The hut was filled to over-

flowing—there were people sitting on benches, on tables, between benches, on top of each other. But before it had run far, the film was stopped. A blank white beam played on the wall, and we saw that several warders had come in and were looking for the most comfortable places. They selected a bench and ordered the prisoners to vacate it. The prisoners decided to stay where they were—it was years since they'd seen a film! The warders' voices grew more threatening, and somebody said, "Right, take their numbers!" That was that; they had to give way. Then suddenly a familiar mocking voice, like the screech of a cat, was heard through the darkened hall:

"Now, lads, really, you know the warders can't see a film anywhere else—let's move."

They exploded in laughter. What a force is laughter! All the power belonged to the warders, but they beat an inglorious retreat, without taking numbers.

"Where's Kishkin?" they shouted.

Not another sound out of Kishkin; Kishkin was missing.

The warders went away, and the film continued.

Next day Kishkin was called before the disciplinary officer. He'd get five days, for sure! No, he came back smiling. He had given a written explanation as follows: "During the *argument* between warders and prisoners about seats for the film show, I called upon the prisoners to give up their seats, as they are supposed to, and to move away." What had he done to be put in the hole?

The prisoner's irrational passion for shows, his ability to forget himself, his grief, and his humiliation for a scrap of nonsense, on film or live, insultingly showing that all's right with the world, was another subject for Kishkin's skillful satire. Before a film show or concert, would-be spectators flock together like sheep. Time goes by and still the door stays shut, while they wait for the head warder to bring his lists and admit the best work teams. They wait half an hour, slavishly pressed together, crushing each other's ribs. Kishkin, at the back of the crowd, slips off his shoes, vaults with a hand from his neighbors onto the shoulders of those in front, and passes quickly, nimbly from shoulder to shoulder over the whole crowd—right up to the gate of paradise! He knocks, his short body writhes from head to foot in a pantomime of impatience to enter. Then he runs back just as quickly over all those shoulders, and hops down. At first the crowd just laughs. But then they feel

deeply ashamed. Standing here like sheep! Right, let's give it a miss.

They disperse. When the warder comes with the lists, nobody is trying to break the door down; in fact, there's hardly anyone to let in. If he wants an audience he'll have to round them up.

Another time a concert was just beginning in the spacious mess hall. They were all in their seats. Kishkin wouldn't think of boycotting a concert. There he was in his green waistcoat, fetching and carrying chairs, helping to draw back the curtain. Each of his appearances drew applause and friendly shouts from the hall. Suddenly he runs across the front of the stage as though someone were pursuing him and, waving a warning hand, shouts, "Dardanelle! Tommyrot!" Roars of laughter. Then there was some sort of hitch. The curtain was up, but the stage was deserted. Kishkin dashed onto the stage. The audience started laughing, but immediately fell silent: he looked now no longer comic but insane, there was a wild glare in his eyes, he was terrifying. He declaimed a poem, trembling, gazing around unseeingly.

> I look and, ah, the sight I see:
> The police rain blows, the blood flows free—
> Streets littered with the dead and dying,
> Son beside father murdered lying. . . .

This was for the Ukrainians, who were half of the audience. They had only lately been brought from seething provinces, and it was like salt on a fresh wound. They howled. A warder was rushing at the stage and Kishkin. But Kishkin's tragic face relaxed in a clown's grin. He shouted, in Russian this time, "When I was in fourth grade we learned that poem for the Ninth of January!"*

And he left the stage, hobbling absurdly.

Zhenya Nikishin was a nice, simple, sociable lad, with an open freckled face. (There were many like him in the countryside, before its destruction. Nowadays you see mainly hostile expressions there.) Zhenya had a small voice, and liked singing for his friends, in the hut or from the stage.

One day "Wife of Mine, Little Wife" was announced. "Music by Mokrousov, words by Isakovsky. Performed by Zhenya Nikishin, with guitar accompaniment."

A sad, simple melody trickled from the guitar. And Zhenya faced that large hall and sang to each of us, showing us how much warmth and tenderness there still was in our hearts.

Wife, oh, little wife,
Dearer far than life—
You and you alone live in my heart!

You and you alone! The long platitudinous slogan about output plans up above the stage grew dim. In the blue-gray half-light of the hall, the long years of camp life—years already lived through, years still remaining—faded. You and you alone! Not the crimes we were alleged to have committed, nor our reckoning with authority. Not our wolfish preoccupations. . . . You and you alone!

None could be more dear,
None could be so near,
Whether we're together or apart.

It was a song about endless waiting for news that never comes. About loneliness and despair. How appropriate it was. Yet prison was never directly mentioned. It could all equally well refer to a lengthy war.

Though I was an underground poet, my instinct failed me: I did not realize at the time that the verses ringing from the stage were those of another underground poet (how many of them are there?!), but a more flexible one than I, better equipped to reach his public.

What could they do to him? Send for the music sheet, check whether it really was Isakovsky and Mokrousov? He had probably said that he could do it from memory.

In the blue-gray dimness sat or stood some two thousand men. They were so quiet and still that they might not have been there at all. Men calloused, brutalized, turned to stone—but now touched to the heart. Tears, it appeared, could still break through, still find a way.

Wife, oh, little wife,
Dearer far than life—
You and you alone live in my heart!

Chapter 6

■

The Committed Escaper

When Georgi Pavlovich Tenno talks nowadays about past escapes—his own, those of comrades, and those of which he knows only by repute—his words of praise for the most uncompromising and persistent heroes—Ivan Vorobyov, Mikhail Khaidarov, Grigory Kudla, Hafiz Hafizov—are these:

"There was a *committed* escaper!"

A committed escaper! One who never for a minute doubts that a man cannot live behind bars—not even as the most comfortable of trusties, in the accounts office, in the Culture and Education Section, or in charge of the bread ration. One who once he lands in prison spends every waking hour thinking about escape and dreams of escape at night. One who has vowed never to resign himself, and subordinates every action to his need to escape. One for whom a day in prison can never be just another day; there are only days of preparation for escape, days on the run, and days in the punishment cells after recapture and a beating.

A committed escaper! This means one who knows what he is undertaking. One who has seen the bullet-riddled bodies of other escapers on display along the central tract. He has also seen those brought back alive—like the man who was taken from hut to hut, black and blue and coughing blood, and made to shout: "Prisoners! Look what happened to me! It can happen to you, too!" He knows that a runaway's body is usually too heavy to be delivered to the camp. And that therefore the head alone is brought back in a duffel bag, sometimes (this is more reliable proof, according to the rulebook) together with the right arm, chopped off at the elbow, so that the Special Section can check

the fingerprints and write the man off.

A committed escaper! It is for his benefit that window bars are set in cement, that the camp area is encircled with dozens of strands of barbed wire, towers, fences, reinforced barriers, that ambushes and booby traps are set, that red meat is fed to gray dogs.

The committed escaper is also one who refuses to be undermined by the reproaches of the average prisoner: You escapers make it worse for the rest! Discipline will be stiffer! Ten inspections a day! Thinner gruel! He ignores the whispered suggestions of other prisoners—not only those who urge resignation ("Life's not so bad even in a camp, especially if you get parcels"), but those who want him to join in protests or hunger strikes, because all that is not struggle but self-deception. Of all possible means of struggle, he has eyes only for one, believes only in one, devotes himself only to one—escape!

He cannot do otherwise! That is how he is made. A bird cannot renounce seasonal migration, and a committed escaper cannot help running away.

In the intervals between unsuccessful attempts, peaceful prisoners would ask Tenno: "Why can't you just sit still? Why do you keep running? What do you expect to find on the Outside—especially now?" Tenno was amazed. "What d'you mean—what do I expect to find? Freedom, of course! A whole day in the taiga without chains—that's what I call freedom!"

Gulag and the Organs had known no prisoners like him or Vorobyov in their *middle* period—the age of the chicken-hearted. Such prisoners came along only in the very early days or after the war.

That was Tenno for you. In each new camp (he was transferred frequently) he was depressed and miserable until his next escape plan matured. Once he had a plan, Tenno was radiant, and a smile of triumph never left his lips.

In fact, he recalls that when the general review of sentences and the rehabilitations began, he was dismayed: he felt the hope of rehabilitation sapping his will to escape.

■

There is no room in this book for his complicated life story. But the urge to escape had been with him from birth. As a small boy

he had run away from boarding school in Bryansk to "America" —down the Desna in a rowboat. He had climbed the iron gates of the Pyatigorsk orphanage in his underwear in midwinter, and run away to his grandmother. He was a very unusual amalgam of sailor and circus performer. He had gone through a school for seamen, served before the mast on an icebreaker, as boatswain on a trawler, as navigation officer in the merchant navy. He had graduated from the army's Institute of Foreign Languages, spent the war with the Northern Fleet, sailed to Iceland and England as liaison officer with British convoys (Plate No. 4). But he had also, from his childhood on, practiced acrobatics; he had appeared in circuses during the NEP* period, and later in the intervals between voyages; had trained gymnasts on the beam, performed as a memory man (memorizing masses of words and figures) and as a mind reader. The circus, and living in seaports, had led to some slight contact with the criminal world: he had picked up something of their language, their adventurousness, their quick-wittedness, their daredeviltry. Later on, serving time with thieves in numerous Disciplinary Barracks, he had absorbed more and more from them. This, too, would come in handy for the committed escaper.

A man is the product of his whole experience—that is how we come to be what we are.

In 1948 he was suddenly demobilized. This was a signal from the other world (he knew languages, had sailed on an English vessel, and was, moreover, an Estonian, though it is true a Petersburg Estonian), but if we are to live we must hope against hope. On Christmas Eve that year in Riga, where Christmas still feels like Christmas, like a holiday, he was arrested and taken to a cellar on Amatu Street, next door to the conservatory. As he entered his first cell he couldn't resist the temptation to tell the apathetically silent warder, "My wife and I had tickets for *The Count of Monte Cristo* and should be watching it right now. He fought for freedom, and I shall never accept defeat."

But it was too early yet to start fighting. We are always at the mercy of our assumption that a *mistake* has been made. Prison? For what? It's impossible! *They'll soon get it sorted out.* Indeed, before his transfer to Moscow they deliberately reassured him (this is done as a safety measure when prisoners are in transit). Colonel Morshchinin, chief of counterespionage, even came to the station to see him off and shook hands with him. "Have a good

journey!" There were four of them, Tenno and his special escort, and they traveled in a separate first-class compartment. When the major and the first lieutenant had finished talking about all the fun they would have in Moscow on New Year's Eve (perhaps special escort duties are merely an excuse for such trips?), they lay down on the upper bunks and appeared to be sleeping. On the other lower bunk lay a chief petty officer. He stirred whenever the prisoner opened his eyes. There was dim light from a blue bulb overhead. Under Tenno's pillow was his first, and last, hastily made parcel from his wife—a lock of her hair and a bar of chocolate. He lay and thought. The rhythm of the carriage wheels was soothing. We can fill their rattle with any meaning, any prophecy we please. It filled Tenno with hope that they would "get it sorted out." And so he had no serious intention of running away. He was only sizing up the best way to do it. (Later on he would often remember that night and cluck with annoyance. Never again would it be so easy to run, never again would freedom be so near!)

Twice in the course of the night Tenno went out along the deserted corridor, and the petty officer went with him. He had his pistol slung low, as sailors always do. He even squeezed into the lavatory together with the prisoner. For a master of judo and wrestling it would have been child's play to *pin him* there and then take his gun from him, order him to keep quiet, and calmly leave the train when it stopped.

The second time the petty officer was afraid to go into that narrow place, and waited outside the door. But the door was shut, and Tenno could have stayed there as long as he liked. He could have broken the window and jumped out onto the tracks. It was night! The train was not moving quickly—this was 1948—and it made frequent stops. True, it was winter, and Tenno had no overcoat and only five rubles on him, but his watch had not yet been taken away.

The luxury of a special escort came to an end at the station in Moscow. They waited for all the passengers to leave the train, and then the sergeant major with light-blue shoulder tabs who had brought the prison van came in and said, "Where is he?"

The admission routine, sleepless nights, solitary confinement, more solitary confinement. A naïve request to be called for interrogation soon. The warder yawned. "Don't be in such a hurry; you'll get more than you want shortly."

At last, the interrogator. "Right, tell me about your criminal

activities." "I'm absolutely innocent!" "Only Pope Pius is absolutely innocent."

In his cell he was tête-à-tête with a stool pigeon. Trying to *box him in.* Come on, tell me what really happened. A few interrogations and it was all quite clear: they'd never straighten it out, never let him go. So he must escape!

The world fame of the Lefortovo Prison did not daunt Tenno. Perhaps he was like a soldier new to the front who has experienced nothing and therefore fears nothing? It was the interrogator, Anatoly Levshin, who inspired Tenno's escape plan. By turning mean and arousing his hatred.

People and peoples have different criteria. So many millions had endured beatings within those walls, without even calling it torture. But for Tenno the realization that he could be beaten with impunity was intolerable. It was an outrage, and he would sooner die than suffer it. So when Levshin, after verbal threats, first advanced on him and raised his fist, Tenno jumped up and answered with trembling fury: "Look, my life's worth nothing anyway! But I can gouge one or both of your eyes out right now! That much I can do!"

The interrogator retreated. One rotten prisoner's life in exchange for a good eye was not much of a bargain. Next he tried to wear Tenno down in the punishment cells, to sap his strength. Then he put on a show, pretending that a woman screaming with pain in the next office was Tenno's wife, and that if he did not confess she would undergo still worse tortures.

Again he had misjudged his man! If a blow from a fist was hard for Tenno to bear, the idea that his wife was being interrogated was no less so. It became increasingly obvious to the prisoner that the interrogator must be killed. This and his escape were combined in a single plan. Major Levshin, too, wore naval uniform, was tall and fair-haired. As far as the sentry on the interrogation block was concerned, Tenno could very easily pass for Levshin. True, Levshin's face was round and sleek whereas Tenno had grown thin. (It wasn't easy for a prisoner to get a look at himself in a mirror. Even if you asked to go to the lavatory when you were under interrogation, the mirror there was draped with a black curtain. Once he saw his chance, made one quick movement and twitched the curtain aside. God, how pale and worn out he looked! How sorry for himself he felt!)

In the meantime they had removed the useless stoolie from the

cell. His bed was left there and Tenno examined it. A metal crosspiece was rusted through at the point where it was fixed to one of the legs. It was about 70 centimeters long. How could he break it off?

First he must . . . perfect his skill in counting seconds precisely. Then calculate for each warder the interval between two peeps through the spy hole. (You had to put yourself in the place of whichever warder was on duty, as he strolled at his own pace along the corridor.) The interval varied between 45 and 65 seconds.

During one such interval he tried his strength, and the metal bar cracked off at the rusted end. Breaking the other, solid end was harder. He would have to stand on it with both feet—but then it would crash onto the floor. So in the interval between two visits he must make time to put a pillow on the cement floor, stand on the bed frame, break it, replace the pillow, and hide the bar for the time being; say, in his bed. And all the time he must be counting seconds.

It broke. The trick was done!

But the problem was only half solved: if they came in and found it, he would be rotting in the punishment cells. Twenty days of that and he would lose the strength he needed to escape, or even to defend himself against the interrogator. Yes, that was it: he would tear the mattress with his fingernails. Extract a little of the flock. Wrap flock around the ends of the bar, and put it back where it had been. Counting the seconds! Right—it was there!

But this was still good only for a short time. Once every ten days you went to the bathhouse, and while you were away your cell was searched. They might discover the breakage. So he must act quickly. How was he to take the bar from the cell to the interrogation room? When they let you out of the cellblock there was no search. They only slapped your clothing when you came back from interrogation, and then only your sides and chest, where there were pockets. They were looking for a blade, to prevent suicide.

Under his naval jacket Tenno wore the traditional sailor's striped jersey—it warms body and soul alike. "The sailor leaves his troubles ashore." He asked a warder for a needle (they will give you one at certain fixed times), as if to sew on buttons made of bread. He undid his jacket, undid his trousers, pulled out the edge of his jersey, and turned it up and stitched it so that it formed a

little pocket (for the lower end of the rod). He had previously snapped off a bit of tape from his underpants. Now he pretended to be sewing a button on his jacket and stitched this tape to the inside of his jersey at chest level, so that it formed a loop to hold the rod steady.

Next he put the jersey on back to front, and began practicing day after day. The rod was set in position down his back and under his jersey: it was pushed through the loop at the top until it rested in the pocket down below. The upper end of the rod came up to his neck, under his tunic collar. His training routine went like this: In the short time between two inspections he would have to fling his hand to the back of his neck, seize the end of the rod while bending his trunk backward, then with a reverse movement straighten like a released bowstring while simultaneously drawing the rod—and strike the investigating officer a smart blow on the head. Then he would put everything back in place. An eye at the spy hole. The prisoner would be leafing through a book.

The movement became quicker and quicker, until the rod fairly whistled through the air. If the blow was not fatal, the investigating officer would certainly be knocked out. If they had arrested his wife, too, he would show none of them mercy!

He also provided himself with two wads of flock, from the same mattress. These he could insert between his gums and his cheeks to make his face fuller.

He must also, of course, be clean-shaven on the day—and they scraped you with blunt razors only once a week. So that the day must be chosen carefully.

How was he to put some color into his cheeks? He would rub just a little blood on them. *That fellow's* blood.

An escaper cannot use his eyes and ears idly as other people do. He must look and listen for his own special purpose. He must let no trifle pass him by without comment. Wherever he is taken—to interrogation, to the exercise yard, to the lavatory—his feet count their steps, count stairs (not all of this will be useful, but they count anyway); his body notes the turns; he keeps his eyes on the ground as ordered, and they examine the floor (what is it made of? is the surface unbroken?), they search his surroundings as far as he can see, inspecting all doors (double or single? what sort of handles? what sort of locks? do they open inward or outward?); his mind assesses the function of every door; his ears listen and make comparisons (that's a sound

I've heard before from my cell; now I know what it means).

The famous K-shaped block of the Lefortovo Prison has one main stairway to all floors, metal galleries, a controller who sticks little flags on a chart. You cross into the interrogation block. The interrogators change rooms according to a roster. So much the better—you can study the layout of all the corridors and the position of the doors in the interrogation block. How do the interrogators get into the building? Through that door with the square window. The main document check is of course carried out not here but in the guardhouse outside, but here, too, they sign themselves in or are scrutinized. Listen. One man goes downstairs and shouts to somebody up above: "Right, I'm off to the ministry!" Splendid; that sentence could be useful to an escaper.

As to the rest of the route from here to the guardhouse, he would have to make a good guess and take the right way without hesitation. But no doubt a path had been worn in the snow. Or the asphalt would be darker and dirtier. How did they get past the guard? By showing an identification card? Or did they leave their cards on entry and give their names to reclaim them? Or perhaps they were all known by sight, and it would be a mistake to give a name instead of just holding your hand out?

You could find the answer to many things if you observed the interrogator closely, instead of attending to his silly questions. To sharpen his pencil he takes a razor blade from inside a little book, perhaps a personal document, which he keeps in his breast pocket. Questions immediately ask themselves.

"That's not his pass. Is his pass in the guardhouse?"

"That little book looks very much like a driver's license. So he comes by car? He must have his car key, then. Does he park outside the prison gates? I shall have to read the license number in his logbook before I leave the office or I may make for the wrong one."

They have no cloakroom. He hangs his overcoat and cap here in the office. So much the better.

Mustn't forget anything important, and must pack it all into four or five minutes. When he's lying there, knocked out, I must:

1. Slip off my jacket and put on his newer one with shoulder tabs.

2. Remove his shoelaces and lace my own floppy shoes up—that will take time.

3. Tuck his razor blade into a specially prepared place in the heel of my shoe (if they catch me and sling me into the nearest cell I can cut my veins).
4. Examine all his documents and take what I need.
5. Memorize the license plate number and find the ignition key.
6. Shove my own dossier into his bulky briefcase and take it with me.
7. Remove his watch.
8. Redden my cheeks with blood.
9. Drag his body behind the desk or screen, so that anybody coming in will think he's left and not raise a hue and cry.
10. Roll the flock into little balls and put them in my cheeks.
11. Put on his coat and cap.
12. Disconnect the wires to the light switch. If anybody comes soon afterward, finds it dark, and tries the switch, he will be sure to think that the bulb has burned out and that's why the interrogator has gone to another office. Even if they screw another bulb in, they won't immediately realize what has happened.

That makes twelve things to be done, and the escape itself will be number thirteen. . . . All this must be done during the night session. It won't be so good if the little book is not a driver's license. That will mean that he comes and goes by a special bus for interrogators (there must be special transport in the middle of the night), and the others will think it strange that Levshin couldn't wait till four or five o'clock but went off on foot in the middle of the night.

Something else to remember: when I go through the door with the square window I must raise my handkerchief to my face as though blowing my nose, and simultaneously turn my head to look at my watch. And to set the sentry's mind at rest I'll call upstairs, "Perov!" (That's his friend.) "I'm off to the ministry! We'll have a talk tomorrow!"

Of course, the odds were against him. For the moment, he gave himself a 3 to 5 percent chance of success: the outer guardroom was completely unknown and he had no real hope of getting past it. But he couldn't die there like a slave! Couldn't feebly submit to kicks! At least he would have the razor blade in the heel of his shoe!

So Tenno turned up, freshly shaven, for one nocturnal interrogation, with the iron bar behind his back. The interrogator questioned, abused, threatened, and all the time Tenno looked at him in surprise: couldn't he sense that his hours were numbered!

It was eleven o'clock. Tenno's plan was to sit tight till two in the morning. Interrogators sometimes wangled themselves a short night and began leaving about that time.

Now he must seize the right moment: either wait for the interrogator to bring some pages over for signature, as he always did, suddenly pretend to feel faint, let the pages slide to the floor, cause him to bend his head for a minute, and . . . Or else, without waiting for the papers, stand up, swaying, plead illness, ask for water. When he brought the enamel mug (the glass was reserved for his own use), Tenno would drain it, drop it, simultaneously raising his right hand to the back of his neck, which would seem quite natural since he was supposed to be dizzy; the interrogator would be bound to look down at the mug on the ground, and . . .

Tenno's heart thumped. A day of rejoicing was at hand. Or perhaps his last day.

Things turned out quite differently. Around midnight another interrogator hurried into the room and began whispering in Levshin's ear. This had never happened before. Levshin made hurried preparations to leave, pressed the button for the warder to come and remove the prisoner.

That was that. Tenno went back to his cell and replaced the iron bar.

Another time the interrogator sent for him when he was unshaven, and there was no point in taking the bar with him.

Then came a daytime interrogation. And it took a strange turn: the interrogator refrained from yelling, and weakened his resolve by predicting that he would get five to seven years, so that there was no need to be downhearted. Somehow Tenno no longer felt angry enough to split his head open. Tenno's wrath was not the sort that lasted.

The mood of high excitement had passed. It seemed to him now that the odds were too great, that it was too much of a gamble.

The escaper's moods are perhaps even more capricious than those of the artist.

All his lengthy preparations had gone for nothing. . . .

But the escaper must be ready for this, too. He had brandished his bar in the air a hundred times, killed a hundred interrogators.

A dozen times he had lived through every minute of his escape in detail—in the office, past the square window, along to the guardroom, beyond the guardroom. He had worn himself out with an escape which he would after all not be making.

Soon afterward they changed his interrogator and transferred him to the Lubyanka. There Tenno did not actively prepare to escape (his heart was not in it now that his interrogation seemed to have taken a more hopeful turn), but he was tirelessly observant, and he devised a training routine.

Escape from the Lubyanka? Is it even possible? If you think about it, it is perhaps easier than escaping from Lefortovo. You soon begin to know your way around those long, long corridors through which you are taken to interrogation. In the corridor you sometimes come across arrows on the wall: "To main entrance No. 2," "To main entrance No. 3." (You are sorry that you were so thoughtless when you were free—that you didn't walk around the outside of the Lubyanka to see where each of the entrances was.) It's easier here precisely because this is not just the territory of a prison but a ministry, where there are large numbers of interrogators and other officials whom the guards cannot know by sight. So that entry and exit is by pass, and the interrogator has his pass in his pocket. Again, if an interrogator is not known by sight, it is not so important to look exactly like him; a rough resemblance is good enough. The new interrogator wears khaki, not naval dress. So that it will be necessary to change into his uniform. No iron bar this time—but if the will is there you can manage. There are all sorts of suitable objects in his office—a marble paperweight, for instance. Anyhow, you needn't necessarily kill him—just stun him for ten minutes and you're away!

But vague hopes of clemency and reasonableness clouded Tenno's resolution. Only in the Butyrki Prison was he relieved of this burden: his sentence, read out from a piece of paper with a Special Board stamp, was confinement in camps for twenty-five years. He signed his name and felt relieved, found himself smiling, felt his legs carrying him easily to the cell for twenty-five-year prisoners. That sentence released him from humiliation, from the temptation to compromise, from humble submission, from truckling, from promises of five to seven years bestowed like alms on a beggar. Twenty-five is it, you bastards? Right; if that's all we can expect from you—we escape!!

Or die. But death was surely no worse than a quarter of a

century of slavery. Even the shaving of his head after his trial—just an ordinary convict crop, never upset anybody—outraged Tenno, as though they had spat in his face.

Now he must seek allies. And study the history of other escapes. Tenno was a novice in this world. Someone must have tried to escape before him.

How often we had all followed the warder through those iron bulkheads which divide the corridors of the Butyrki into sections—yet how many of us have noticed what Tenno saw at once: each door had two locks, but swung open when the warder undid only one of them. This meant that the second lock was for the moment not in use: it consisted of three prongs which could emerge from the wall and slide into the iron door.

Other people in the cell might talk about what they liked, but Tenno wanted stories about escape attempts and those who took part in them. There was even one prisoner—Manuel García—who had been in a riot and seen the three prongs used. It had happened a few months earlier. The prisoners in one of the cells had been let out to relieve themselves, had seized the warder (although it was against the rules that he was alone—there had been no trouble for years, and they were used to submissiveness!), stripped him, tied him up, and left him in the latrine, while one of the prisoners put on his uniform. The lads took the keys and ran around opening all the doors on the corridor (they couldn't have chosen a better place—some of the prisoners on that corridor were under sentence of death!). They started shouting, whooping with joy, calling to each other to go and liberate other corridors and take over the whole prison. They were oblivious of the need for caution. They should have stayed in their cells quietly preparing for flight, allowing only the prisoner disguised as a warder to walk the corridor, but instead they poured out in a noisy crowd. Hearing all the noise, a warder from the next corridor looked through the two-way spy hole in the iron door and pressed the alarm button. When the alarm is given the second lock in each of the corridor doors is turned from a central control point, and there is no key to it on warders' key rings. The mutinous corridor was cut off. A large body of prison guards was called out. They stood in facing ranks, let the mutineers through one by one and beat them up, identified the ringleaders and led them away. These men already had a *quarter* each. Was the sentence doubled? Or were they shot?

In transit to the camp. The "watchman's cabin," so well known

to prisoners, at the Kazan station—at a certain distance, of course, from busy public places. Here prisoners are brought in plain vans and the prison cars are loaded before they are coupled to the trains. Tense escort troops line the tracks on both sides. Dogs strain to be at someone's throat. The order is given: "Escort—at the ready!" and there is a deadly rattle of breechblocks. These people really mean it. The dogs go with them when they lead the prisoners along the tracks. Make a break for it? If you do a dog will catch you.

(But for the committed escaper, who is continually shunted from camp to camp, from jail to jail because of his attempts to escape, the future holds many such stations, many marches under escort along the tracks. And sometimes he will be marched along without dogs. Pretend to be lame and sick, scarcely able to drag your duffel bag and jacket behind you, and the escort will be more at ease. If there are several trains standing on the tracks—you might be able to get lost among them. That's it: drop your things, bend down, and hurl yourself under a railroad car. But as soon as you bend over you will see the boots of an extra guard striding along on the other side of the train. . . . Every contingency has been foreseen. All you can do is to pretend that weakness has caused you to fall and drop your things. Unless you are lucky enough to find a through train passing swiftly alongside! Run across the tracks right in front of the engine—no guard will run after you! You can risk your life for freedom, but why should he risk his? By the time the train flashes by you have gone! But for this you need two strokes of luck: the train must come just at the right time, and you must get past its wheels in one piece.)

From the Kuibyshev Transit Prison they were taking prisoners to the station in open trucks—making up a long train of red prison cars. In the transit prison Tenno obtained from a local sneak thief who "respected escapers" two local addresses to which he might go for initial support. He shared these addresses with two other would-be runaways and they concerted a plan; all three would try to sit in the back row and when the truck slowed down at a turning (Tenno had made the inward journey in a dark van and although his eyes would not recognize the turning, his sides had taken note of it) they would jump, all three of them at once—right, left, and rear—past the guards, knocking them over if necessary. The guards would open fire, but they would not hit all three. They might not shoot at all—there would be people in the streets.

Would they give chase? No, they couldn't abandon the other prisoners in the truck. So they would just shout and fire into the air. If the runaways were stopped, it would be by ordinary people, our Soviet people, passers-by. To frighten them off, the runaways must pretend to be holding knives! (They had no knives.)

The three of them maneuvered at the search point and hung back so that they would get onto the last truck and not leave before dusk. The last truck arrived, but . . . it was not a shallow three-tonner, like its predecessors, but a Studebaker with high sides. When he sat down even Tenno found that the top of his head was below the rim. The Studebaker moved quickly. Here was the turn! Tenno looked around at his comrades in arms. There was terror on their faces. No, they wouldn't jump. No, they were not committed escapers. ("But can you be sure of yourself?" he wondered.)

In the dark, with lanterns to light their way, to a confused accompaniment of barking, yelling, cursing, clanking, they were installed in cattle cars. Here Tenno let himself down—he was too slow to inspect the outside of the car (and your committed escaper must see everything while the seeing is good; he is not allowed to miss anything at all!).

At stops the guards anxiously sounded the cars with mallets. They sounded every single plank. They were afraid of something, then—but of what? Afraid that a plank might be sawn through. So that was the thing to do!

A small piece broken off a hacksaw and sharpened was produced (by the thieves). They decided to cut through a solid plank under the bottom bed shelf. Then when the train slowed down, to lower themselves through the gap, drop onto the line, and lie still until the cars had passed over them. True, the experts said that at the end of a cattle train carrying prisoners there was usually a *drag*—a metal scraper, with teeth which passed close to the ties, caught the body of anyone trying to escape, and dragged him over the ties to his death.

All night long they took turns slipping under the bed shelf and sawing away at a plank in the wall, gripping the blade, which was only a few centimeters long, with a piece of rag. It was hard going. Nonetheless, the first breach was made. The plank began to give a little. Loosening it, they saw in what was now the morning light white, unplaned boards outside their car. Why white? The reason was that an additional footboard for guards had been built onto

their car. Right there, by the breach they had made, stood a sentry. It was impossible to go on sawing till the board came away.

Prison escapes, like all forms of human activity, have their own history, and their own theory. It's as well to know about them before you try your own hand.

The history is that of previous escapes. The security branch publishes no popular pamphlets on escape technology—it stores experience only for its own use. You can learn the history from others who once escaped and were recaptured. Their experience has been dearly bought—with blood, with suffering, almost at the cost of their lives. But to inquire in detail, step by step, about the attempts of one escaper, then a third, then a fifth, is no laughing matter; it can be very dangerous. It is not much less dangerous than asking whether anyone knows whom you should see about joining an underground organization. Stoolies may listen in to your long conversations. And worst of all, the narrators themselves, under torture after an attempted flight, forced to choose between life and death, may have lost their nerve and gone over to the other side, so that now they are live bait rather than fellow spirits. One of the godfathers' main tasks is to determine in good time who sympathizes with escape attempts or takes an interest in them—to forestall the lurking would-be escaper, make an entry in his dossier; from then on he'll be in a disciplinary squad and escape will be much more difficult.

Still, as he moved from prison to prison, camp to camp, Tenno eagerly interrogated escapers. He carried out escapes himself, he was caught, he had other escapers for cellmates in the camp jails —and that was his chance to question them. (Sometimes he made mistakes. The heroic escaper Stepan ——— sold him to the Kengir security officer Belyaev, who repeated to Tenno all the questions he had asked.)

As for the theory of escape—it is very simple. You do it any way you can. If you get away—that shows you know your theory. If you're caught—you haven't yet mastered it. The elementary principles are as follows. You can escape from a work site or you can escape from the living area. It is easier from work sites: there are many of them, the security measures are less rigid, and the escaper has tools to hand. You can run away alone—it is more difficult, but no one will betray you. Or you can run away in a group, which is easier, but then everything depends on whether you are a well-

matched team. Theory further prescribes that you should know the geography as well as if you had an illuminated map in front of you. But you will never catch sight of a map in the camp. (The thieves, incidentally, are completely ignorant of geography: they take as north the transit prison where they felt cold last time through.) A further precept: you must know the people through whose region your escape route lies. Then there is the following general advice as to method: you must constantly prepare to escape according to plan, but be ready at any minute to do it quite differently, to seize a *chance*.

Here is an example of opportunism. At Kengir once, all the prisoners in the Disciplinary Barracks were marched out to make mud bricks. Suddenly they were hit by one of those dust storms which are so frequent in Kazakhstan: it grows darker and darker, the sun is hidden, handfuls of dust and small stones lash your face so painfully that you cannot keep your eyes open. Nobody was ready to run at such short notice, but Nikolai Krykov rushed to the boundary fence, flung his jerkin onto the barbed wire, scrambled across, scratching himself all over, and hid just outside the camp area. The storm passed. The jerkin on the wire told them that he had escaped. They sent out a mounted search party; the riders had dogs on leashes. But the cold storm had swept scent and tracks clean away. Krykov sat out the search in a pile of rubbish. Next day, however, he had to move on! And the motor vehicles sent to scour the steppe picked him up.

Tenno's first camp was Novorudnoye, near Dzhezkazgan. Now you're in the very place where they have doomed you to die. This is the place of all places from which you must escape! All around there is desert—salt flats and dunes, or firmer ground held together by tufted grass or prickly camel weed. In some parts of the plain Kazakhs roam with their herds, in others there is not a soul. There are no rivers, and you are very unlikely to come upon a well. The best time for flight is April or May, while melting snow still lingers here and there in puddles. But the camp guards are very well aware of this. At this time of year the search of prisoners going out to work becomes stricter, and they are not allowed to take with them a single bite or a single rag more than is necessary.

That autumn, in 1949, three runaways, Slobodyanyuk, Bazichenko, and Kozhin, risked a dash to the south: their idea was to walk along the river Sary Su to Kyzyl Orda. But the river had

dried up completely. When they were caught they were nearly dead of thirst.

Taught by this experience, Tenno decided that he would not make his escape in autumn. He went along to the Culture and Education Section regularly—to show that he was no runaway, no rebel, but one of those rational prisoners who hope to mend their ways by the time their twenty-five-year sentence is up. He helped in every way he could, promised to perform his acrobatic stunts and his memory-man turn at camp concerts, and in the meantime went through every bit of paper in the Culture and Education Center until he found a rather poor map of Kazakhstan which the godfather had carelessly left around. Right. There was an old caravan route to Dzhusaly, 350 kilometers away, and there would quite probably be a well along the way. Then he could go northward 400 kilometers, toward Ishim; here there would perhaps be water meadows. Whereas in the direction of Lake Balkhash lay the Betpak-Dala—500 kilometers of unrelieved desert. But pursuit was unlikely in that direction.

Those were the distances. That was the choice.

The strangest ideas force their way into the mind of the inquisitive escaper. A sewage truck sometimes called at the camp—a tank with a suction pipe. The mouth of the pipe was wide. Tenno could easily crawl through it, stand up inside the tank, with his head bent, and then the driver could take in the liquid sewage as long as he didn't fill up to the top. You would be covered with filth, you might choke, drown, suffocate on the way—but this seemed less revolting to Tenno than slavishly serving out his sentence. He examined himself. Was he game? He was. What about the driver, though? He was a minor offender, serving a short sentence, and with an exit permit. Tenno had a smoke with him and looked him over. No, he was not the right man. He wouldn't risk his pass to help someone else. He had the mentality of the Corrective Labor Camp: only fools help other people.

In the course of that winter Tenno devised a plan and also picked himself four comrades. But one day while the plan was still being patiently worked out, as theory requires, he was unexpectedly marched out to a newly opened work site—a stone quarry. It was in a hilly spot, and invisible from the camp. As yet there were no watchtowers and no security fence: just stakes knocked into the ground and a few strands of wire. At one point there was a gap in the wire—which served as a gate. Six guards stood outside

the wire, with nothing to raise them above ground level.

Beyond them was the April steppe, its grass still fresh and green, and a blaze of tulips as far as the eye could see! Those tulips, that April air, were more than the heart of an escaper could bear! Perhaps this was his *chance?*... While you're still not suspected, not yet in the Disciplinary Barracks—now's the time to run!

During his time there Tenno had got to know a lot of people in the camp and he now quickly assembled a team of four: Misha Khaidarov (he had been with the marines in North Korea, had crossed the 38th parallel to avoid a court-martial; not wishing to spoil the good relations firmly established in Korea, the Americans had handed him back and he had got a *quarter*); Jazdik, a Polish driver from the Anders army (he vividly summarized his life story with the help of his unmatching boots—"one from Hitler, one from Stalin"); and, lastly, Sergei, a railwayman from Kuibyshev.

Then a lorry arrived with real posts and rolls of barbed wire for a boundary fence—just as the dinner break was beginning. Tenno's team, loving forced labor as they did, especially when it was to make their prison more secure, volunteered to unload the lorry in the rest period. They scrambled onto the back. But since it was, after all, dinnertime, they took their time while they thought things over. The driver had moved away from his vehicle. The prisoners were lying all over the place, basking in the sun.

Should they run for it or not? They had nothing ready—no knife, no equipment, no food, no plan. But Tenno knew from his little map that if they were driving they must make a dash for Dzhezdy and then to Ulutau. The lads were eager to try it: this was their *chance!* Their lucky chance!

From where they were to the sentry at the "gate," the way was downhill. Just beyond the gate the road rounded a hill. If they drove out fast they'd soon be safe from marksmen. And the sentries could not leave their posts!

They finished unloading before the break was over. Jazdik was to drive. He jumped off, and puttered about the lorry while the other three lazily lay down in the rear, out of sight—hoping that some of the sentries hadn't seen where they had got to. Jazdik brought the driver over. We haven't kept you waiting—so let's have a smoke. They lit up. Right, wind her up! The driver got into the cab, but the engine obstinately refused to start. (The three in the back of the lorry didn't know Jazdik's plan and thought their

attempt had misfired.) Jazdik began turning the crank. Still the engine would not start. Jazdik was tired and he suggested to the driver that they change places. Now Jazdik was in the cab. And the engine immediately let out a roar! The lorry rolled down the slope toward the sentry at the gate. (Jazdik told them later that he had tampered with the throttle while the driver was at the wheel, and quickly turned it on again before he himself took over.) The driver was in no hurry to jump in; he thought that Jazdik would stop the lorry. Instead it passed through the "gate" at speed.

Two shouts of "Halt!" The lorry went on. Sentries opened fire —shooting into the air at first, because it looked very much like a mistake. Perhaps some shots were aimed at the lorry—the runaways couldn't tell; they were lying flat. Around a bend. Once behind the hill they were safe from bullets. The three in the back kept their heads down. It was bumpy, they were traveling fast. Then—suddenly—they came to a stop and Jazdik cried out in despair: he had taken the wrong turn and they were pulled up short by the gates of a mine, with its own camp area and its own watchtowers.

More shooting. Guards ran toward them. The escapers tumbled out onto the ground face downward and covered their heads with their hands. Convoy guards kick, aiming particularly at the head, the ears, the temples, and, from above, at the spine.

The wholesome universal rule "Don't kick a man when he's down" did not apply in Stalin's *katorga!* If a man was down, that's just what they did—kicked him. And if he was on his feet, they shot him.

But the inquiry revealed that *there had been no breakout!* Yes! The lads said in unison that they'd been dozing in the back when the lorry started moving, then there was shooting and it was too late for them to jump off in case they were shot. And Jazdik? He was inexperienced, couldn't handle the lorry. But he'd steered for the mine next door, not for the steppe.

So they got off with a beating.[1]

1. Misha Khaidarov was to make many other attempts to escape. Even in the easiest years of the Khrushchev period, when habitual escapers were lying low and waiting to be released legally, he and his pals who had no hope of pardon would try to escape from the All-Union special prison Andzyoba-307: accomplices would throw homemade grenades under the watchtowers to distract the attention of the guards while the escapers tried to hack through the wire of the inner camp area with axes. But they would be kept back by machine-gun fire.

Preparations for *planned escape* take their own course. To make a compass: take a plastic container and mark the points on it. Break a bit off a spoke, magnetize it, and mount it on a wooden float. Then pour in water. And that's your compass. . . . Drinking water can conveniently be poured into an inner tube, which the escaper will carry like a greatcoat roll. All these things (together with food and clothing) are carried gradually to the woodworking plant, from which the escape is to be made, and hidden in a hole near the band saw. A free driver sells them an inner tube. Filled with water, this too now lies in the hole. Sometimes trains arrive by night and the loaders are left at the work site to deal with them. That's when they must run for it. One of the free employees, in return for a sheet brought out from the camp area (best prices paid!), has already cut the two lower strands of wire near the band saw, and the night for unloading timber is getting closer and closer! But one prisoner, a Kazakh, tracks them to the hole they use as a hiding place and denounces them.

Arrest, beatings, interrogations. In Tenno's case there were too many "coincidences" which looked like preparations to escape. They were sent off to the Kengir jail, and Tenno was standing face to the wall, hands behind his back, when the captain in charge of the Culture and Education Section went by, stopped near him, and exclaimed:

"Who'd have thought it of you! And you a member of the concert party!"

What most amazed him was that a peddler of prison-camp culture should want to escape. On concert days he was allowed an extra portion of mush—and yet he had tried to run away! Some people are never satisfied!!

On May 9, 1950, the fifth anniversary of victory in the Fatherland War, naval veteran Georgi Tenno entered a cell in the celebrated Kengir Prison. The cell was almost dark, with only one little window high up, and there was no air, but there were plenty of bugs—the walls were covered with splotches of bug blood. That summer a heat wave was raging, with temperatures between 40 and 50 degrees centigrade, and everyone lay around naked. It was a little cooler under the sleeping platform, but one night two prisoners shot out from there with a yell: poisonous spiders had perched on them.

It was a select company in the Kengir jail, brought together from various camps. In every cell there were experienced escapers,

hand-picked champions. Tenno had found his committed escapers at last!

Among the prisoners was Captain Ivan Vorobyov, Hero of the Soviet Union. During the war he had been with the partisans in the Pskov oblast. He was a resolute man of indomitable courage. He had already made unsuccessful attempts to escape, and would make others. Unfortunately, he could not take on the jailbird coloring, the half-caste look which is so helpful to a runaway. He had preserved his soldier's straightforwardness; he had a chief of staff and they sat on the bed platform drawing a map of the locality and openly discussing plans. He could not adjust to the sly, furtive ways of the camps, and was invariably betrayed by stool pigeons.

A plan fermented in their heads: to overpower the warder supervising the issue of the evening meal if he came alone. Then open all the cells with his keys. Rush to the jailhouse exit and take control of it. Then open the jailhouse door and mob the camp guardroom. Take the guards along as prisoners and break out of the camp area as soon as darkness fell. Later they were taken out to work on a housing site, and a plan for escaping through the sewage system was born.

But these plans were never implemented. Before the summer was out this whole select company was manacled and transported for some reason to Spassk. There they were put into a hut with a separate security system. On the fourth night the committed escapers removed the bars from a window, got out into the service yard, noiselessly killed a dog, and tried to cross a roof to the huge main camp area. But the iron roof bent under their feet, and the noise in the quiet of night was like thunder. The warders gave the alarm. But when they arrived inside the hut, everyone was peacefully sleeping and the bars were back in place. The warders had simply imagined it all.

They were destined never, never to remain long in one place! The committed escapers, like Flying Dutchmen, were driven ever onward by their troubled destiny. If they didn't run away, they were transferred. This whole band of men in a hurry was switched, in handcuffs, to Ekibastuz camp jail. There the camp's own unsuccessful runaways—Bryukhin and Mutyanov—were added to their strength.

As part of their special punitive regime they were taken out to work at the limekilns. They unloaded quicklime from lorries with

a wind blowing, and the lime was slaked in their eyes, mouths, windpipes. When they raked out the furnaces, their sweaty naked bodies were coated with slaked lime. This daily poisoning, intended to reform them, only forced them to hurry up with their escape.

The plan dictated itself. The lime was brought by lorries—they must make their break in a lorry. Break through the boundary fence, which still consisted of barbed wire in this place. Take a lorry with plenty of petrol in the tank. The ace driver among the escapers was Kolya Zhdanok, Tenno's partner in the unsuccessful breakout from the sawmill. It was agreed that he would drive the lorry. But agreement or no agreement, Vorobyov was too strong-willed, too much the man of action, to put himself in anyone else's hands. So that when they pinched the lorry (armed with knives, they climbed into the cab one on each side, and the white-faced driver could only sit there between them, an involuntary accomplice) it was Vorobyov who took over the steering wheel.

Every minute counted! They must all jump onto the lorry and break through the barrier. "Ivan, move over!" Tenno begged him. But that was something Ivan Vorobyov could not do! Having no faith in his skill as a driver, Tenno and Zhdanok stayed behind. There were now only three escapers: Vorobyov, Salopayev, and Martirosov. Suddenly, from nowhere, Redkin ran up—an intellectual, a mathematician, an eccentric, with no record at all as an escaper: he was in the Disciplinary Barracks for something quite different. But on this occasion he had been standing near, realized what was happening, and hopped onto the lorry, holding for some reason a lump not of bread but of soap.

"Freedom bound? I'm coming with you."

(Like somebody boarding a bus: "Is this right for Razgulyai?")

The lorry swung around and moved forward at low speed, so as to break through the strands gradually—the first of them with its bumpers, then it would be the turn of the engine, then of the cab. In the outer security zone the lorry could pass between the posts, but in the main boundary area it had to knock posts down, because they were staggered. In first gear, the lorry started pushing a post over.

The guards on the towers were taken aback: there had been an incident at another site a few days earlier, when a drunken driver had smashed a post in the maximum-security zone. Perhaps this was another drunk? The thought was with them for fifteen sec-

onds. But by then the post was down, and the lorry had changed into second gear and driven over the barbed wire without a puncture. Shoot now! But there was nothing to shoot at: to protect the guards from the winds of Kazakhstan, their towers had been boarded up on three sides. They could only shoot into the enclosed area ahead of them. . . . By now the lorry was invisible to them, speeding over the steppe and raising dust. The watchtowers fired impotently into the air.

The roads were all free, the steppe was smooth, and in five minutes Vorobyov's lorry could have been on the horizon—but *purely by chance,* a prisoner-transport van belonging to the camp guards division drove up, on its way to the transport base for repairs. It quickly took some of the sentries aboard and gave chase to Vorobyov.

The breakout was over . . . within twenty minutes. The battered runaways, with Redkin the mathematician among them, his bloodied mouth full of the warm, salty taste of freedom, staggered their way to the camp jail.[2]

All the same, word went around the camp: the break had been a beautiful job! and they had been stopped only by accident! So ten days later the former air cadet Batanov and two of his friends repeated the maneuver: they broke through the barbed-wire barriers at another work site and raced off! Only in their haste they had taken the wrong road, and came under fire from a watchtower at the limekilns. A tire was punctured and the lorry came to a stop. Tommy-gunners surrounded it. "Out you come!" Should they get out? Or should they wait to be dragged out by the scruff of the neck? One of the three, Pasechnik, obeyed the order, got out of the lorry, and was immediately riddled with a furious burst of bullets.

In something like a month there had been three attempts to escape from Ekibastuz—and still Tenno was not on the run! He was pining away. A jealous longing to outdo them gnawed at him. From the sidelines, you see all the mistakes more clearly and always think that you could do better. If, for instance, Zhdanok

2. In November, 1951, Vorobyov again escaped from a work site, on a dump truck with five others. They were caught within a few days. Rumor has it that in 1953 Vorobyov was one of the mutinous "center" in the Norilsk rising, and was afterward in the Aleksandrovsk Central Prison. A biography of this remarkable man, beginning with his early years before the war and his wartime career as a partisan, would probably help us to understand our age much better than we do.

had been at the wheel instead of Vorobyov, they could, or so Tenno thought, have got away from the prison van. The minute Vorobyov's lorry was stopped, Tenno and Zhdanok sat down to discuss how they would make their own break.

Zhdanok was small, swarthy, very agile, and a "half-caste."* He was now twenty-six. He had been taken from his native Byelorussia to Germany and worked for the Germans as a driver. He, too, was serving a *quarter.* When he caught fire he was very energetic, he put everything he had into his work, into an impulse, a fight, an escape. Of course, he lacked discipline, but Tenno had plenty of that.

Everything pointed to the limekilns as the best place for their escape. If they couldn't make their break in a lorry, they must seize one outside the restricted area. But before the guards or the security officer could interfere with their plans, Tenno was called aside by the foreman of the punitive work gang, Lyoshka the Gypsy (Lyoshka Navruzov), a "bitch," and a puny creature who nonetheless struck terror into everybody, because in his time in the camps he had murdered dozens of people (he thought nothing of killing a man for a parcel or even a pack of cigarettes).

"I'm an escaper myself and I love escapers. Look at all these bullet scars; that's from when I ran away in the taiga. I know you meant to run away with Vorobyov. Just don't do it from the work site: I'm responsible there, and I'll get another stretch."

In other words, he loved escapers but loved himself more. Lyoshka the Gypsy was content with a "bitch's" life and wouldn't let anybody ruin it. That's how much your professional criminal "loves freedom."

But perhaps escape attempts at Ekibastuz really were becoming hackneyed? Everybody tried to escape from a work site, nobody from the living area. Dare he risk it? The living area also was at present surrounded only by wire; there was no solid fence.

One day at the limekilns they damaged the electric cable of a cement mixer. An electrician was called in from outside. While Tenno helped him with his repairs, Zhdanok stole some wire cutters from his pocket. The electrician missed them. Should he inform the guards? He couldn't—he would be punished himself for his carelessness. He begged the professional criminals to give him back his cutters, but they denied taking them.

While they were at the limekilns the would-be escapers made themselves two knives: they chiseled strips of metal from

shovels, sharpened them at the blacksmith's shop, tempered them, and cast tin handles for them in clay molds. Tenno's was a "Turkish" knife; it would be a handy weapon to use, and what was more important, the flashing curve of its blade was terrifying. Their intention was to frighten people, not kill them. Wire cutters and knives they carried to the living area held to their ankles by the legs of their underpants, and stowed them away in the foundations of the hut.

Once again their escape plan hinged on the Culture and Education Section. While the weapons were being made and transferred, Tenno chose a suitable moment to announce that he and Zhdanok would like to take part in a camp concert. (This would be the first ever at Ekibastuz, and the camp command could not wait to get it rolling: they needed an extra item in their list of measures to take prisoners' minds off plotting, and besides, it would be fun to see them posturing on a stage after eleven hours of hard labor.) Sure enough, Tenno and Zhdanok were given permission to leave the punishment wing after it was locked for the night, and while the camp area as a whole was still alive and in motion for another two hours. They roamed the still unknown camp, noting how and when the guard was changed on the watchtowers, and which were the most convenient spots to crawl under the boundary fence. In the Culture and Education Section itself Tenno carefully read the Pavlodar provincial newspaper, trying to memorize the names of districts, state farms, collective farms, farm chairmen, Party secretaries, shock workers* of all kinds. Next he announced that he would put on a sketch, for which he must get hold of his ordinary clothes from the clothing store and borrow a briefcase. (A runaway with a briefcase—that was something out of the ordinary! It would help him to look important.) Permission was given. Tenno was still wearing his naval jacket, and now he took out his Icelandic gear, a souvenir of a Northern convoy. Zhdanok took from his pal's suitcase a gray Belgian suit, which looked incongruously elegant in camp surroundings. A Latvian prisoner had a briefcase among his belongings. This, too, was taken. Also real caps instead of the camp issue.

The sketch required so much rehearsing that the time left till lights out in the main camp area was too short. So there was one night, and later on another, when Tenno and Zhdanok did not return to the punishment wing at all, but spent the night in the hut which housed the Culture and Education Section, to accustom

their own warders to their absence. (Escapers must have at least one night's head start!)

What would be the most propitious moment for escape? Evening roll call. When the lines formed outside the huts, the warders were all busy checking in prisoners, while the prisoners had eyes only for the doors, longing to get to their beds; no one was watching the rest of the camp area. The days were getting shorter, and they must hit on one when roll call would come after sundown, in the twilight, but *before* the dogs were stationed around the boundary fence. They must not let slip those five or ten uniquely precious minutes, because there would be no crawling out once the dogs were there. They chose Sunday, September 17. It would help that Sunday was a nonworking day, so that they could recruit their strength by evening, and take time over the final preparations.

The last night before escape! You can't expect much sleep. You think and think. . . . Shall I be alive this time tomorrow? Possibly not. And if I stay here in the camp? To die the lingering death of a goner by a cesspit? . . . No, you mustn't even begin to accept the idea that you are a prisoner.

The question is this: Are you prepared to die? You are? Then you are also prepared to escape.

A sunny Sunday. To rehearse their sketch, both of them were let out of the punishment wing for the whole day. To Tenno's surprise, there was a letter from his mother in the CES. On that day of all days. Prisoners can call to mind so many coincidences of this kind. . . . It was a sad letter, but perhaps it helped to steel his resolve: his wife was still in prison; she had not yet gone on to a camp. And his sister-in-law was demanding that his brother should break off relations with the traitor.

The runaways were very short of food: in the punishment wing they were on short rations, and hoarding bread would excite suspicion. They banked on seizing a lorry in the settlement and traveling quickly. However, that Sunday there was also a parcel from home—his mother's blessing on his escape. Glucose tablets, macaroni, oatmeal—these they could carry in the briefcase. The cigarettes they would exchange for makhorka.* Except for one packet, which they would give to the orderly in the sick bay—and Zhdanok would be on the list of those excused from duty for the day. The purpose of this was as follows: Tenno could go to the CES and say, "My Zhdanok is sick; we shan't be coming to

rehearse this evening." While in the punishment barracks he would tell the warder and Lyoshka the Gypsy: "We shan't come back to the hut this evening; we're rehearsing." So no one could be expecting them in either place. They must also get hold of a "katyusha"—an improvised lighter consisting of a wick in a tube —and a steel and flint to light it. This was better than matches for a man on the run. Then they must pay their last visit to Hafiz in his hut. The old Tatar, an experienced escaper, was to have made the break with them. But then he had decided that he was too old and would only be a hindrance to their flight. Now he was the only man in the camp who knew about their plans. He was sitting on his stool with his legs tucked under him. He spoke in a whisper. "God give you good fortune! I shall pray for you!" He whispered a few more words in Tatar, running his hands over his face.

Also in Ekibastuz was Tenno's old cellmate in the Lubyanka, Ivan Koverchenko. He did not know about the escape plan, but he was a good comrade. He was a trusty, and lived in a cabin of his own: it was there that the runaways kept all the things *for the sketch.* It was the obvious place for them to boil the oatmeal which had arrived in the meager parcel from Tenno's mother. Some strong black tea was brewed at the same time. They were enjoying their miniature banquet, the guests overcome by the thought of what was before them, their host by the pleasure of a fine Sunday, when they suddenly saw through the window a coffin of rough boards being carried across the camp from the guardhouse to the morgue.

It was for Pasechnik, who had been shot a few days before.

"Yes," sighed Koverchenko. "It's useless trying to escape."

(If only he knew . . .)

Some devil prompted Koverchenko to rise, pick up their bulging briefcase, stride self-importantly about the cabin, and sternly declare:

"The investigating officer knows all about it! You are planning to escape!"

He was joking. He had taken it into his head to play the part of an interrogator. . . .

Some joke.

(Or perhaps it was a delicate hint? I can guess what you're up to, boys. But I advise against it!)

When Koverchenko went out, the runaways put on their suits under the clothes they were wearing and unpicked all their num-

ber patches, leaving them attached by the merest threads so that they would tear off with one pull. The caps without numbers went into the briefcase.

Sunday was coming to an end. A golden sun was setting. Tenno, tall and leisurely, and Zhdanok, small and vivacious, now draped padded jackets around their shoulders, took the briefcase (by now everyone in the camp was used to their eccentric appearance), and went to the prearranged departure point—on the grass between some huts, not far from the boundary fence and directly opposite a watchtower. The huts screened them from two other watchtowers. There was only this one sentry facing them. They opened out their padded jackets, lay down on them, and played chess, so that the sentry would get used to them.

The sky turned gray. There was the signal for roll call. The prisoners flocked to their huts. In the half-light, the sentry on his watchtower should not be able to make out that two men were still lying on the grass. His watch was nearly over, and he was less alert than he had been. A stale sentry always makes escape easier.

They intended to cut the wire, not in the open, but directly under the tower. The sentry certainly spent more time watching the boundary fence farther away than the ground under his feet.

Their heads were down near the grass, and besides, it was dusk, so they could not see the spot at which they would shortly crawl under. But it had been thoroughly inspected in advance. Immediately beyond the boundary fence a hole had been dug for a post, and it would be possible to hide there a minute. A little farther on there were mounds of slag: and a road running from the guards' hamlet to the settlement.

The plan was to take a lorry as soon as they reached the settlement. Stop one and say to the driver, "Do you want to earn something? We have to bring two cases of vodka up here from old Ekibastuz." What driver would refuse drink? They would bargain with him. "Half a liter all right? A liter? Right, step on it, but not a word to anybody." Then on the highway, sitting with the driver in his cab, they would overpower him, drive him out into the steppe, and leave him there tied up. While they tore off to reach the Irtysh in a single night, abandon the lorry, cross the river in a little boat, and move on toward Omsk.

It got a little darker still. Up in the towers searchlights were switched on. Their beams lit up the boundary fence, but the runaways for the time being were in a shadowy patch. The very time!

Soon the watch would be changed and the dogs would be brought along and posted for the night.

Now lights were switched on in the huts, and they could see the prisoners going in after roll call. Was it nice inside? It would be warm, comfortable. . . . Whereas here you could be riddled with Tommy-gun bullets, and it would be all the more humiliating because you were lying stretched on the ground.

Just so long as they didn't cough or sneeze under the tower.

Guard away, you guard dogs! Your job is to keep us here, ours is to run away!

But now let Tenno himself take up the story.

Chapter 7

■

The White Kitten (Georgi Tenno's Tale)

I am the senior partner, so I must go first. Sheath knife at my belt, wire cutters in my hands. "Catch up with me when I cut the boundary wire!"

I crawl flat on my belly. Trying to press myself into the ground. Shall I look toward the sentry or not? If I do, I shall see what danger I'm in, and perhaps even draw his gaze upon me. How I'm tempted to look! But I won't.

Nearer to the watchtower. Nearer to death. I expect a burst of machine-gun fire to hit me. Any minute now I shall hear its chatter. Perhaps he can see me perfectly well, and is standing there laughing at me, letting me scrabble a bit further? . . .

Here's the boundary wire. I turn around and lie parallel with it. I cut the first strand. The severed wire twangs as it loses its tautness. Now for the machine-gun burst? . . . No. Perhaps no one else could hear that sound. Though it was very loud. I cut the second strand. And the third. I swing one leg over, then the other. My trousers catch on the barb of a trailing strand. I free myself.

I crawl over several meters of plowed land. There is a rustling behind me. It's Kolya—but why is he making so much noise? Of course, it's the briefcase dragging along the ground. Here are the abutments to the main fence. The wires are crisscrossed.

I cut a few of them. Now there is a spiral entanglement. I cut it twice and clear a way. Now I cut some strands of the main fence. Are we breathing at all? Probably not.

Still he doesn't shoot. Is he dreaming of home? Or thinking of the dance tonight?

I heave my body over the outer fence. There is yet another barbed-wire entanglement. I get caught in it. I cut my way out. I mustn't forget and mustn't get stuck: there must still be the outer sloping barriers ahead. Here they are. I cut them.

Now I am crawling toward the hole. Here it is, just where it should be. I lower myself into it. Kolya follows. We pause to get our breath. But we must hurry on! Any minute now the guard will be relieved and the dogs will be here.

We hoist ourselves out of the hole and crawl toward the slag heaps. We still can't bring ourselves to look around. In his eagerness to be out of the place, Kolya rises onto all fours. I push him down again.

We negotiate the first slag heap in a leopard crawl. I put the wire cutters under a stone.

Here's the road. A little way from it, we get to our feet.

No one opens fire.

We saunter along, without hurrying; the time has come to make ourselves look like inmates of the "open prison" nearby. We tear the numbers from our chests and knees, and suddenly two men come toward us out of the darkness. They are on their way from the garrison to the settlement. They are soldiers. And we still have numbers on our backs!

"Vanya!" I say loudly. "Maybe we can manage half a liter?"

We walk slowly, still not on the road itself, but toward it. We walk slowly, to let them go by first, but straight toward them, and without hiding our faces. They pass within two meters of us. To avoid turning our backs on them, we almost come to a standstill. They go by, talking about their own affairs, and we tear the numbers off each other's backs!

Have we escaped notice? . . . Are we free? Now to the settlement to find a lorry.

But what's that? A flare roars up over the camp! Another one! A third!

They have found us out! The pursuit will start right away! We must run!!

No more looking around, no more stopping to think, no more careful calculation—our magnificent plan is in ruins. We rush into the steppe, to get as far from the camp as we can! We gasp for breath, tumble over bumps in the ground, jump up again—while

rocket after rocket shoots up into the sky! Remembering previous escape attempts, we imagine them shortly sending out mounted search parties with dogs on leashes, over the steppe in every direction. So we sprinkle all our precious makhorka in our tracks, and take big jumps.[1]

Now we shall have to make a wide detour around the settlement, and keep to the steppe. It takes a lot of time and trouble. Kolya begins to doubt whether I am leading him the right way. I am offended.

But here is the embankment of the Pavlodar railway. We are very glad to see it. From the embankment we are astounded by the widely scattered lights of Ekibastuz—it looks bigger than we have ever seen it.

We choose ourselves a stick. Holding on to it, we walk along, one on each rail. Once a train goes by, the dogs will be unable to pick up the scent from the rails.

We go on like that for about 300 meters, then take a few jumps —and into the steppe.

At last we can breathe freely! We want to sing and shout! We hug one another. We really are free! How we admire ourselves for resolving to escape, succeeding in doing so, and eluding the dogs.

Although the test of our will power is only just beginning, we feel as though the worst of it were already over.

The sky is clear. Dark and full of stars—you never see it like that from the camp because of all the lights. Guided by the pole-star, we travel north-northeast. Later on we shall veer right and reach the Irtysh.

We must try to get as far away as possible this first night. In that way we shall increase by the power of two the area which our pursuers must keep under observation. All the brave cheerful

1. Pure chance! Like the prison van which those other escapers met! An unforeseeable accident! Chance events, favorable or hostile, lie in wait for us at every step. But it is only a runaway, on the razor edge of danger, who discovers how heavily they weigh in the balance. Quite accidentally, the lighting in the camp area failed a few minutes after Tenno and Zhdanok crawled out—and it was for this reason only that flares, of which there were still a great many in Ekibastuz, were so lavishly let off. If the runaways had crawled out five minutes later, the sentries, by then on the alert, might have noticed, and shot them. If the runaways had kept their self-possession under the brilliantly lit sky, coolly observed the camp area and seen that the lamps and the boundary searchlights were out, they could have calmly made their way to some motor vehicle, and their escape would have taken an entirely different course. But in their position—with flares over the camp just after they had crawled out—they could have no doubt that the hunt was on, and they must run for their lives.

A brief failure of the lighting system—and their whole escape plan was upset.

songs we can remember, in various languages, we sing as we go along, covering eight kilometers an hour. But because we have been confined for many months to our cells, we find that our legs have forgotten how to walk and are soon tired. (We had foreseen this, but had expected to be riding!) We start lying down to rest with our legs together in the air like the poles of a wigwam. Then on again. Then another lie-down.

Behind us the glow of Ekibastuz is a surprisingly long time fading. We have been walking for several hours, and still the glow is in the sky.

But now the night is ending, and the east grows pale. By day we cannot walk over the bare open steppe, nor indeed will it be easy for us to hide there: there are neither bushes nor long grass, and we know that they will be looking for us from the air, too.

So we dig ourselves a foxhole with our knives (the ground is hard and strong and digging is difficult), half a meter wide and thirty centimeters deep, and we lie there head to toe, covering ourselves with dry, prickly yellow steppe gorse. Now is the time to sleep and recover our strength! But sleep is impossible. This helpless lying around in the daytime, for more than twelve hours at a time, is much harder to bear than the nighttime walking. You cannot stop thinking. . . . The September sun is baking hot, there is nothing to drink, and there will be nothing. We have broken the rule for escapers in Kazakhstan—you must run away in the spring, not in the autumn. . . . But of course we had expected to be riding. . . . We suffer this misery from five in the morning until eight in the evening. Our bodies are painfully numb but we must not change position; if we raise ourselves or disturb the gorse, a man on horseback may see us from a distance. Wearing two suits each, we are dying from the heat. Grin and bear it!

Until at last the darkness comes—the only time for escapers.

We rise. Our legs hurt, and standing is difficult. We walk slowly, trying to ease our cramped limbs. There is little strength in us. Except for chewing bits of dry macaroni and gulping down our glucose tablets, we have had nothing all day. We are thirsty.

Even in the dark we must beware of ambush tonight: they have of course broadcast the news far and wide, dispatched motor vehicles in all directions, and especially in the direction of Omsk. We wonder how and when they found our jerkins and the chessmen on the ground. They would realize at once from the numbers

that we were the runaways—no need to consult the card index and call the roll.[2]

We move at not more than four kilometers an hour. Our legs ache. We often lie down to rest. Water, water! We cover no more than twenty kilometers that night. Then we have to look again for somewhere to hide, and lie down for our daytime torment.

We think we see buildings. We start crawling cautiously toward them. Unexpectedly, out there on the steppe, they turn out to be huge rocks.

Perhaps there will be water in their cavities? No . . . but there is a niche under one of the rocks. Scratched out by jackals, perhaps. Squeezing into it is difficult. And what if the rock topples over? It could flatten you like a pancake—and you might not die immediately. It is already rather cold. Morning finds us still awake. Nor can we sleep in the daytime. We take our knives and begin honing them on a stone: they lost their edge when we dug our foxhole at the last stopping place.

In the middle of the day we heard the rumble of wheels nearby. That was bad—we were near a road. A Kazakh rode right by us. Muttering to himself. Should we jump out and run after him? He might have water. But how could we tackle him without inspecting the area first? Perhaps we could be seen.

Might not the search party pass down this very road? We slid cautiously out of our hole and looked around from ground level. A hundred meters or so away there was a dilapidated structure. We crawled over. There was no one there. A well!! No; it was choked with rubbish.

There was some trampled straw in a corner. Should we lie down here for a bit? We lay down. Sleep would not come. Lord, how the fleas did bite! Fleas!! Such big ones, and so many of them! Kolya's light-gray Belgian jacket was black with fleas. We shook

2. What happened was this. In the morning some working prisoners found the padded jackets, so cold that they had obviously been out all night. They tore off the numbers and pinched them: a padded jacket is something worth having. The warders simply didn't see the things. Nor did they spot the cut wires till late on Monday afternoon. They had in fact to spend a whole day checking against the card index to discover who had escaped. The runaways could still have gone on walking or riding without concealment in the morning! You can see what a difference was made by their failure to investigate the flares.

Back in the camp, the picture of the escape on Sunday evening gradually became clear; people remembered that the lights had gone out, and exclaimed in admiration: "Aren't they crafty! Aren't they clever! However did they manage to put the lights out?" For a long time everybody thought that the light failure had been a help to them.

ourselves, cleaned ourselves. We crawled back again to the jackal's hole. Time was running out, our strength was running out, and we were not moving.

At dusk we got up. We were very weak. We were tortured by thirst. We decided to bear still more sharply to the right, so as to reach the Irtysh sooner. A clear night, a black sky with stars. The constellations of Pegasus and Perseus fuse as I look at them to form the outline of a bull, head down, pressing forward urging us on. And on we go.

Suddenly, rockets shoot into the sky before us! They're ahead of us now! We freeze in our tracks. We see an embankment. A railway line. No more rockets, but the beam of a searchlight travels along the rails, swinging from side to side. A handcar is reconnoitering the steppe. Any moment now they will spot us—and it will be all over. . . . We feel stupid and helpless: lying in range of the beam, waiting to be spotted.

It passed over us, and we were not seen. We jump up. We cannot run, but hurry as best we can away from the embankment. But the sky quickly clouds over and with our dashing from right to left we have lost our sense of direction. Now we are moving almost by guesswork. We cover only a few kilometers, and even these may be pointless zigzagging.

A wasted night! . . . It's getting light again. Once more we pluck steppe gorse. We must dig a hole, but I no longer have my curved Turkish knife. I lost it either when I was lying down or in my headlong dash away from the embankment. A disaster! How can an escaper manage without a knife? We dig our hole with Kolya's.

There's one good thing about it. A fortuneteller had told me that I should meet my end at the age of thirty-eight. Sailors can't help being superstitious. But the day now dawning is September 20—my birthday. I am thirty-nine today. The prophecy no longer affects me. I shall live!

Once more we lie in a hole motionless, without water. If only we could fall asleep—but we cannot. If only it would rain! Time drags by. Things are bad. We've been on the run for very nearly three days now, and still haven't had a single drop of water. We are swallowing five glucose tablets a day. And we haven't made much progress—perhaps a third of the way to the Irtysh. And our friends in the camp are feeling glad that we are enjoying freedom in the realm of the "green prosecutor."*

Twilight. Stars. Course—north by east. We struggle on. Sud-

denly we hear a shout in the distance: "Va-va-va-va!" What's this? We remember Kudla, an old hand at escaping: according to him, this is how the Kazakhs frighten wolves away from their sheep.

A sheep! Give us a sheep and we are saved! As free men we would never have dreamed of drinking blood. But here and now —just let us get at it.

We approach stealthily. Crawling. Buildings. We cannot see a well. Going into the house is too dangerous—if we meet people we shall leave a trail. We creep up to the adobe sheepfold. Yes, it was a Kazakh woman shouting, to scare off wolves. We heave ourselves over a low part of the wall into the enclosure. I have my knife between my teeth. We creep along the ground, sheep-hunting. I hear one of them breathing near me. But they shy away from us, again and again! Once more, we creep up on them from different directions. Can I somehow grab one by the leg? They run away! (Later on, my mistake will be explained to me. Because we are crawling, the sheep take us for wild animals. We should have approached them erect, as though we were their masters, and they would have submitted tamely.)

The Kazakh woman senses that something is wrong, comes close, and peers into the darkness. She has no light, but she picks up lumps of earth, starts throwing them, and hits Kolya. She's walking straight toward me; any minute now she will step on me! She either sees us or senses our presence, and screeches: "Shaitan! Shaitan!" She rushes away from us and we from her—over the wall, where we lie still. Men's voices. Calm voices. Probably saying, "Silly woman's seeing things."

A defeat. All right, let's wander on.

The silhouette of a horse. Ah, the beauty! Just what we need. We go up to it. It stands still. We pat its neck, slip a belt around it. I give Zhdanok a leg up, but cannot scramble on myself; I'm too weak. I cling on with my hands, press my belly against it, but cannot cock my leg over. The horse fidgets. Suddenly it breaks loose, bolts with Zhdanok and throws him. Luckily the belt remains in his hand; we've left no trace, and they can blame it all on Shaitan.

We have worn ourselves out with the horse. Walking is harder than ever. And now there is plowed land to cross. Our feet catch in the furrows and we have to drag them along. But this is not altogether a bad thing: where there are plowed fields, there are people, and where there are people, there is water.

We walk on, struggle on. Drag ourselves along. More silhouettes. Again we lie flat and crawl. Haystacks! Meadows? Fine! Are we near the Irtysh? (Alas, we are still a long, long way from it.) With one last effort we scramble onto the hay and burrow into it.

And this time we slept the whole day through. Counting the sleepless night before our escape, we had now missed five nights' sleep.

We wake at the end of the day and hear a tractor. Cautiously we part the straw, and poke our heads out an inch. Two tractors have arrived. There is a hut. Evening is drawing on.

A bright idea! There will be water in the tractors' cooling system! When the drivers go to bed we can drink it.

Darkness falls. We have reached the end of our *fourth* day on the run. We crawl up to the tractors.

Luckily there is no dog. Quietly, we make our way to the drainage cap and take a swig. No good—there is kerosene in the water. It's undrinkable. We spit it out.

These people have everything—they have food and they have water. Why don't we just knock on the door like beggars: "Brothers! Good people! Help us! We are convicts, escaped prisoners!" Just like it used to be in the nineteenth century—when people put pots of porridge, clothing, copper coins by the paths through the taiga.

> I had bread from the wives of the village
> And the lads saw me right for makhorka.

Like hell we will! Times have changed. Nowadays they turn you in. Either to salve their consciences, or to save their skins. Because for *aiding and abetting* you can have a *quarter* slapped on you. The nineteenth century failed to realize that a gift of bread and water could be a political crime.

So we drag ourselves farther. Drag ourselves on all through the night. We can't wait to reach the Irtysh; we look eagerly for signs of the river's proximity. There are none. We drive ourselves mercilessly on and on. Toward morning we come across another haystack. With even more difficulty than yesterday, we climb into it. We fall asleep. Something to be thankful for. When we wake up it is nearly evening.

How much can a man endure? *Five* days now we have been on the run. Not far away we see a yurt with an open shed near it.

Quietly we creep up to it. Coarse millet had been strewn on the ground. We stuff the briefcase with it, try to munch some, but we cannot swallow—our mouths are too dry. Suddenly we catch sight of a huge samovar near the yurt, big enough to hold several gallons. We crawl up to it. We turn the tap—the bloody thing is empty. When we tip it we get a couple of mouthfuls.

We stagger on again. Staggering and falling. Lying down, you breathe more easily. We can no longer get up off our backs. First we have to roll over onto our bellies. Then raise ourselves onto all fours. Then, swaying, onto our feet. Even this leaves us out of breath. We have grown so thin that our bellies seem stuck to our backbones. As dawn approaches we cover some 200 meters, no more. And lie down.

That morning no haystack came our way. There was some kind of burrow in a hill, dug by an animal. We lay in it through the day, but could not get to sleep. That day it got colder, and we felt a chill from the ground. Or perhaps our blood was no longer warming us? We tried to chew some macaroni.

Suddenly I see a line of soldiers advancing! With red shoulder tabs! They're surrounding us! Zhdanok gives me a shake: You're imagining things, it's a herd of horses.

Yes, it was a mirage. We lay down again. The day was endless. Suddenly a jackal arrived, coming home to his hole. We put some macaroni down for him and crawled away, hoping to lure him after us, stab him and eat him. But he wouldn't touch it. He went away.

To one side of us there was a slope, downhill a little the salt flats of a dried-up lake, and, on the other bank, a yurt and smoke drifting in the air.

Six days have gone by. We have reached the limit: we see red tabs in our hallucinations, our tongues are stuck to the roofs of our mouths. If we pass water at all there is blood in it. It's no good! Tonight we must get food and water at any price. We'll go over there, to the yurt. If they refuse us, we'll take it by force. I remember the old fugitive Grigory Kudla and his war cry: Makhmadera! (Meaning: "Stop asking—and grab!") Kolya and I come to an understanding: at the right moment I will say "Makhmadera!"

In the darkness we crept quietly toward the yurt. There was a well. But no bucket. Not far away a saddled horse stood at a hitching post. We glanced through the narrow opening. By the

light of an oil lamp we saw a Kazakh couple and some children. We knocked and went in. I said, "Salaam!" And all the time there were big spots in front of my eyes and I was afraid of falling. Inside there was a low, round table (even lower than our modernist designers make them) for the beshbarmak.* Round the yurt were benches covered with felt. There was a big metal-bound chest.

The Kazakh muttered something in reply, and looked sullen—he was not a bit pleased to see us. To make myself look important (and anyway, I needed to conserve my strength), I sat down and put the briefcase on the table. "I'm in charge of a geological survey team, and this is my driver. We've left our transport back in the steppe with the others, five or maybe seven kilometers from here: the radiator leaks and the water's all run out. We ourselves haven't had anything to eat for three days; we're starving. Give us something to eat and drink, aksakal.* And tell us what you think we should do."

But the Kazakh screws up his eyes and offers no food and drink. "What you name, boss?" he asks.

I had it all ready once, but my head is buzzing, and I've forgotten.

"Ivanov," I answer. (Stupid, of course.) "Come on then, sell us some groceries, aksakal!" "No. Go to my neighbor." "Is it far?" "Two kilometers."

I sit there on my dignity, but Kolya can't hold out any longer, seizes a griddle cake and tries to chew it, though it is obviously hard work for him. Suddenly the Kazakh picks up a whip, with a short handle and a long leather lash, and threatens Zhdanok with it. I get to my feet. "So that's the sort of people you are! That's your famous hospitality!" Now the Kazakh is prodding Zhdanok in the back with the whip handle, trying to drive him out of the yurt. I give the command. "Makhmadera!" I take out my knife and tell the Kazakh, "In the corner! Lie down!" The Kazakh dives through a curtain. I am right behind him: he may have a gun there, may shoot us at any moment. But he flops on the bed, shouting, "Take it all! I won't say anything!" Oh, you miserable cur, you! What do I want with your "all"? Why couldn't you give me the little bit I asked for in the first place?

To Kolya I say, "Keep your eyes peeled!" I stand by the door with my knife. The Kazakh woman is screaming, the children start crying. "Tell your wife we won't hurt any of you. We just want to eat. Is there any meat?" He spread his hands. "Yok."* But

Kolya pokes about in the yurt and produces dried mutton out of a meat safe. "Why did you lie?" Kolya also grabs a basin with baursaki in it—lumps of dough, deep fried. I suddenly realize that there is kumiss in the jugs on the table. Kolya and I drink. With every swig life comes back to us! What a drink! My head begins to spin, but intoxication seems to help me, I feel stronger all the time. Kolya is beginning to enjoy himself. He passes some money to me. There turn out to be 28 rubles. There's probably more tucked away somewhere.

We drop the dried mutton into a sack, and scoop baursaki, griddlecakes, and sweets of some sort—dirty "satin cushions"—into another. Kolya also pinches a dish of roasted mutton scraps. A knife! That's something we really need. We try not to forget anything—wooden spoons, salt. . . . I carry the sack out. I come back and take a bucket of water. I take a blanket, a spare bridle, the whip. (He mutters to himself—he doesn't like this: how is he going to catch us?)

"Right, then," I tell the Kazakh. "Let that be a lesson to you, and mind you don't forget it. You should be more friendly to your guests! We would have gone on our knees to you for a bucket of water and a dozen baursaki. We do no harm to decent people. Here are your final instructions: lie where you are without stirring! We have friends outside."

I leave Kolya outside the door while I lug the rest of the loot over to the horse. I suppose we should be hurrying, but my mind works calmly. I take the horse to the well and let it drink its fill. It, too, has quite a job ahead of it; it will have to carry its excessive load all through the night. I drink from the well myself. So does Kolya. Just then some geese come up to us. Kolya has a weakness for poultry. "Shall we grab the geese?" he says. "Shall we wring their necks?" "It'll make too much noise. Don't waste time."

I let down the stirrups and tighten the girths. Zhdanok puts the blanket behind the saddle, and climbs onto it from the well wall. He takes the bucket of water in his hands. We have tied the two sacks together and slung them over the horse's back. I get into the saddle. And so by the light of the stars we ride off eastward, to throw our pursuers off the trail.

The horse objected to having two riders, strangers at that, and kept tossing its head, trying to turn back toward home. We mastered it somehow. It set off briskly. There were lights nearby. We made a detour. Kolya sang quietly in my ear.

Out on the range, where the wind blows free,
A cowboy's life is the life for me,
With a horse I can trust beneath me.

"I saw his passport, too," said Kolya. "Why didn't you take it? A passport always comes in handy. You can give them a peep at the cover—not too close."

On the road, we took frequent drinks of water and snacks without dismounting. Our mood was entirely different now! All we wanted now was to gallop as far away as we could before daylight!

We heard the cries of birds. A lake. It would be a long way around it, and we grudged the time. Kolya dismounted and led the horse along a slippery causeway. We got across. But we suddenly noticed—no blanket. It had slipped off. *We had left a trail.*

This was very bad. From the Kazakh's place many paths led in all directions, but if they found the blanket and drew a line from the yurt to that point, our route would be clear. Should we go back and look for it? There was no time. In any case, they must know we were going north.

We called a halt. I held the horse by a rein. We ate and drank, ate and drank, endlessly. The water was nearly down to the bottom of the bucket—we could hardly believe it.

Course—due north. The horse wouldn't break into a trot, but walked quickly, at 8 to 10 kilometers an hour. In six nights we had notched only 150 kilometers, but that night we did another 70. If we hadn't zigzagged about, we should be on the Irtysh by now.

Dawn. But nowhere to hide. We rode on. It was getting dangerous. Then we saw a deep hollow, almost a hole. We took the horse down into it, and ate and drank again. Suddenly, a motorcycle stuttered nearby. That was bad—there was a road. We must find a safer hiding place. We climbed out and looked around. Not too far off there was a dead and deserted Kazakh village.[3] We made our way there. We shed our load between the three walls of a ruined house, then hobbled the horse and turned it out to graze.

But there was no sleep that day: with the Kazakh and the blanket, we had *left a trail.*

3. The years 1930–1933 left many such ruined villages dotted about Kazakhstan. First Budenny passed through with his cavalry (to this day there is not a single kolkhoz called after him, not a single picture of him anywhere in Kazakhstan), then famine.

Evening. *Seven* days now. The horse was grazing some way off. We went after it—and it shied away, evaded us. Kolya grabbed it by the mane, but it dragged him along and he fell. It had freed its front legs—and now there was no holding it. We hunted it for three hours, wearing ourselves out, drove it in among the ruins, tried to slip a noose made from our belts around its neck, but still it wouldn't give in. We bit our lips, but we had to abandon it. All we had left was the bridle and the whip.

We ate, and drank our last water. We shouldered the sacks with the food, and the empty bucket. And off we went. Today we had the strength for it.

The following morning caught us in an awkward spot and we had to hide in some bushes not far from a road. Not the best of places—we could be spotted. A cart rattled by. We didn't sleep that day either.

As the *eighth* day ended we set off again. When we had gone a little way we suddenly felt soft earth underfoot: the plow had been here. We went on and saw headlights along the roads. Careful now!

There was a young moon up among the clouds. Yet another dead and ruined Kazakh hamlet. Farther on, the lights of a village, and the words of a song reached our ears:

"Hey, lads, unharness the horses. . . ."

We put the sacks down among the ruins, and made for the village with the briefcase and bucket. We had our knives in our pockets. Here's the first house—with a grunting piglet. If only we'd met him out on the steppe. A lad rode toward us on a bike. "Hey, pal, we've got a truck over there; we're moving grain. Where can we get some water for the radiator?" The boy got off, went ahead of us, and pointed. There was a tank on the edge of the village; probably the cattle drank from it. We dipped the bucket in and carried it away full, without taking a drink. We parted with the lad, then sat down and drank and drank. We half-emptied the bucket at one go (we were thirstier than ever today, because we had eaten our fill).

There seemed to be a slight chill in the air. And there was real grass under our feet. There must be a river near! We must look for it. We walk and walk. The grass is higher, there are bushes. A willow—where they are there is always water. Reeds! Water!!! No doubt a backwater of the Irtysh. Now we can splash around and wash ourselves. Reeds two meters high! Ducks start up from

under our feet. We can breathe freely here! We shan't come to grief here!

And this was when for the first time in eight days the stomach discovered that it was still working. After eight days out of action, what torment it was! Birth pains are probably no worse.

Then back we went to the abandoned village. There we lit a fire between the walls and boiled some dried mutton. We should have used the night to move on, but all we wanted was to eat and eat insatiably. We stuffed ourselves until we could hardly move. Then, feeling pleased with life, we set off to look for the Irtysh. At a fork in the road something happened for the first time in eight days—we quarreled. I said, "Right," Zhdanok said, "Left." I felt sure that it should be right, but he wouldn't listen. Another of the dangers that lie in wait for escapers—falling out with one another. When you are on the run, one of your number must be allowed to have the last word, otherwise you are in trouble. Determined to have my way, I went off to the right. I walked a hundred meters, and still heard no footsteps behind me. My heart ached. We couldn't just part like that. I sat down by a haystack and looked back. . . . Kolya was coming! I hugged him. We walked on side by side as though nothing had happened.

There are more bushes now and the air is chillier. We walk to the edge of a sharp drop. Down below, the Irtysh splashes and babbles and playfully breathes on us. We are overjoyed.

We find a haystack and burrow into it. What about it, tracker dogs, still think you can find us? You haven't a hope! We fall into a heavy sleep.

We were awakened by a shot! And dogs barking quite near! . . .

Was this it, then? Was our freedom to end so soon? We clung together and stopped breathing. A man went by. With a dog. A hunter! . . . We fell into an even deeper sleep . . . and slept the day through. This was how we spent our *ninth* day.

When it got dark we set off along the river. Three days had gone by since we left a trail. The dog handlers would only be looking for us along the Irtysh by now. They would realize that we were making for the water. If we went along the bank we might easily stumble into an ambush. Besides, it was hard work—we had to go around bends, creeks, reed beds. We needed a boat!

A light, a little house on the riverbank. The splash of oars, then silence. We lay low and waited for some time. They put the light out. We went quietly down to the water. There was the boat. And

a pair of oars. Splendid! (Their owner might have taken them with him.) "The sailor leaves his troubles ashore." My native element! Quietly, to begin with, without splashing. Once out in midstream, I rowed hard.

We move on down the Irtysh, and from around a bend a brightly lit steamer comes toward us. So many lights! The windows are all ablaze, the whole ship rings with dance music. Passengers, free and happy, stroll on the deck and sit in the restaurant, not realizing how happy they are, not even aware of their freedom. And how cozy it is in their cabins! . . .

In this way we traveled more than twenty kilometers downstream. Our provisions were running out. The sensible thing would be to stock up again while it was still night. We heard cocks crowing, put in to shore, and quietly climbed toward the sound. A little house. No dog. A cattle shed. A cow with a calf. Hens. Zhdanok is fond of poultry, but I say we'll take the calf. We untie it. Zhdanok leads it to the boat while I, in the most literal sense, wipe out our tracks, otherwise it will be obvious to the tracker dogs that we are traveling by boat.

The calf came quietly as far as the bank, but stubbornly refused to step into the boat. It was as much as the two of us could do to get him in and make him lie down. Zhdanok sat on him, to hold him down, while I rowed—once in the clear we would kill him. But that was our mistake—trying to carry him alive! The calf started getting to his feet, threw Zhdanok off, and heaved his forelegs into the water.

All hands on deck! Zhdanok hangs on to the calf's hindquarters, I hang on to Zhdanok, we all lean too far to one side, and water pours in on us. We are as near as need be to drowning in the Irtysh! Still, we drag the calf back in! But the boat is very low in the water and must be bailed out. Even that must wait, though, till we kill the calf. I take the knife and try to sever the tendon at the back of his neck—I know the place is there somewhere. But either I can't find it or the knife is too blunt; it won't go through. The calf trembles, struggles, gets more and more agitated—and I am agitated, too. I try to cut his throat—but this is no good either. He bellows, kicks, looks as if to jump clean out of the boat or sink us. He wants to live—but we have to live, too!

I saw away, but cannot cut deep enough. He rocks the boat, kicks its sides—the silly idiot will sink us any minute now! Because he is so nasty and so stubborn, a red hatred for him sweeps over

me, as though he were my worst enemy, and I start savagely, randomly pricking and jabbing him with the knife.[4] His blood spurts forth and sprays us. He bellows loudly and kicks out desperately. Zhdanok clamps his hands around the calf's muzzle, the boat rocks, and I stab and stab again. To think that at one time I couldn't hurt a mouse or a fly! But this is no time for pity: it's him or us!

At last he lay still. We started hurriedly scooping out water with a bail and some tin cans, each of us using both hands. Then we rowed on.

The current drew us into a side channel. Ahead lay an island. This would be a good place to hide; it would soon be morning. We wedged the boat well into the reeds. We dragged the calf and all our goods onto the bank, and to make the boat still safer, strewed reeds over it. It wasn't easy to haul the calf by its legs up the steep overhang. But once there, there was grass waist high, and trees. Like a fairy tale! We had spent several years in the desert by now. We had forgotten what forests and grass and rivers were like. . . .

It was getting light. The calf looked aggrieved, we thought. But thanks to this little friend of ours we could now live for a while on the island. We sharpened the knife on a fragment of file made from our "katyusha." I had never before skinned a beast, but now I was learning. I slit the belly, pulled back the skin, and removed the entrails. In the depths of the wood we lit a fire and started stewing veal with oats. A whole bucketful of it.

A feast! And best of all, we feel at ease. At ease because we are on an island. The island segregates us from mean people. There are good people, too, but somehow runaways don't often come across them—only mean ones.

It is a hot, sunny day. No need for painful contortions to hide in a jackal's hole. The grass is thick and lush. Those who trample it every day don't know how precious it is, don't know what it means to plunge into it breast high, to bury your face in it.

We roam about the island. It is overrun by dog roses, and the hips are already ripe. We eat them endlessly. We eat more soup. And stew some more veal. We make kasha with kidneys.

We feel light-hearted. We look back at our difficult journey and find plenty to laugh at. We think of them waiting back there for

4. Is this not like the hatred our oppressors feel for us as they destroy us?

our sketch. Cursing us, explaining themselves to the administration. We make a play of it. We roar with laughter!

We tear bark from a thick trunk and burn in the following inscription with red-hot wire: "Here on their way to freedom in October, 1950, two innocent people sentenced to hard labor for life took refuge." Let this sign of our presence remain. Out in the wilds here it will not help our pursuers, and someday people will read it.

We decide not to hurry on. All that we ran away for we have: our freedom! (It can hardly be more complete when we reach Omsk or Moscow.) We also have warm, sunny days, clean air, green grass, leisure. And meat in plenty. Only we have no bread, and miss it greatly.

We lived on the island for nearly a week: from our *tenth* to the beginning of our *sixteenth* day. In the thickest part of the wood we built ourselves a shelter of dry boughs. It was cold at night even there, but we made up for lost sleep in the daytime. The sun shone on us all this time. We drank a lot, trying to store water as camels do. We sat serenely, looking for hours through the branches at life over yonder, on shore. Over there vehicles went by. The grass was being mown again, the second crop this summer. No one dropped in on us.

One afternoon while we were dozing in the grass, enjoying the last rays of the sun, we suddenly heard the sound of an ax at work on the island. Cautiously raising ourselves, we saw, not far away, a man lopping branches and moving gradually toward us.

In a fortnight, with no means of shaving, I had grown a beard, a terrible reddish bristling bush, and was now a typical escaped convict. But Zhdanok had no growth at all; he was like a smooth-faced boy. So I pretended to be asleep and sent him to head the man off, ask for a smoke, tell him that we were tourists from Omsk, and find out where he came from himself. If needs be, I was ready to act.

Kolya went over and had a chat with him. They lit up. He turned out to be a Kazakh from a nearby kolkhoz. Afterward we saw him walk along the bank, get into his boat, and row off without the branches he had cut.

What did this mean? Was he in a hurry to report us? (Or perhaps it was the other way round: perhaps he was afraid that we might inform on him; you can do time for wood-stealing, too. That was what our lives had come to—everybody feared everybody else.) "What did you say we were?" "Climbers." I didn't

know whether to laugh or to cry—Zhdanok always made a muddle of things. "I told you to say hikers! What would climbers be doing on the flat steppe?!"

No, we couldn't stay there. Our life of bliss was over. We dragged everything back to the boat and cast off. Although it was daytime, we had to leave quickly. Kolya lay on the bottom, out of sight, so that from a little way off it would look as if there was just one man in the boat. I rowed, keeping to the middle of the Irtysh.

One problem was where to buy bread. Another was that we were now coming to inhabited places, and I could no longer go unshaven. We planned to sell one of our suits in Omsk, buy tickets several stations down the line, and get away by train.

Toward evening we reached a buoy keeper's hut and went up there. We found a woman, alone. She was frightened, and began rushing around. "I'll call my husband at once!" And off she went. With me following to keep an eye on her. Suddenly Zhdanok called out from the house in alarm: "Zhora!" Damn you and your big mouth! We had agreed that I would call myself Viktor Aleksandrovich. I went back. Two men, one with a hunting rifle. "Who are you?" "Tourists, from Omsk. We want to buy some groceries." And, to lull their suspicions: "Let's go into the house—why are you so inhospitable?" It worked, and they relaxed. "We've got nothing here. Maybe at the sovkhoz.* Two kilometers farther down."

We went to the boat and traveled another twenty kilometers downstream. It was a moonlit night. We climbed the steep bank: a little house. No light burning. We knocked. A Kazakh came out. And this first man we saw sold us half a loaf and a quarter of a sack of potatoes. We also bought a needle and thread (probably rather rash of us). We asked for a razor, too, but he was beardless and had no use for one. Still, he was the first kind person we had met. We got ambitious and asked whether there was any fish. His wife rose and brought us two little fishes and said, "Besh denga." "No money." This was more than we had hoped for—she was giving them to us free! These really were kind people! I started stowing the fish in my sack, but she pulled them back again. "Besh denga—five rubles," the man of the house explained.[5] Ah, so that's

5. The narrator misunderstands the Kazakh words "besh denga" ("five rubles") as Russian "bez deneg" ("without money").

it! No, we won't take them; too dear. We rowed on for the rest of the night. Next day, our *seventeenth* on the run, we hid the boat in the bushes and slept in some hay. We spent the *eighteenth* and *nineteenth* in the same way, trying not to meet people. We had all we needed: water, fire, meat, potatoes, salt, a bucket. On the precipitous right bank there were leafy woods, on the left bank meadows, and a lot of hay. In the daytime we lit a fire among the bushes, made a stew, and slept.

But Omsk was not far off, and we should be compelled to mix with people, which meant that I must have a razor. I felt completely helpless: with neither razor nor scissors, I couldn't imagine how I was going to rid myself of all that hair. Pluck it out a hair at a time?

On a moonlit night we saw a mound high over the Irtysh. Was it, we wondered, a lookout post? From the times of Yermak? We climbed up to look. In the moonlight we saw a mysterious dead township of adobe houses. Probably also from the early thirties . . . What would burn they had burned, the mud-brick walls they had knocked down, some of the people they had tied to the tails of their horses. Here was a place the tourists never visited. . . .

It had not rained once in those two weeks. But the nights were already very cold. To speed things up, I did most of the rowing, while Zhdanok sat at the tiller, freezing. And sure enough, on the twentieth night he started asking for a fire, and hot water to warm himself. I put him at the oars, but he shivered feverishly and could think of nothing but a fire.

His comrade in flight could not deny him a fire—Kolya should have known that and denied himself. But that was the way with Zhdanok—he could never control his desires: remember how he had snatched the griddlecake from the table, and what a temptation the poultry was to him.

He kept shivering and begging for a fire. But they would be keeping their eyes skinned for us all along the Irtysh. It was surprising that no search party had crossed our path so far. That we had not been spotted on a moonlit night in the middle of the Irtysh and stopped.

Then we saw a light on the higher bank. Kolya stopped begging for a fire and wanted to go inside for a warm-up. That would be even more dangerous. I should never have agreed. We had gone through so much, suffered so many hardships—and for what? But

how could I refuse him—perhaps he was seriously ill. And he could refuse himself nothing.

In the light of an oil lamp two Kazakhs, a man and a woman, were sleeping on the floor. They jumped up in fright. "I have a sick man here," I explained. "Let him get warm. We are on official business from the Grain Procurement Agency. They ferried us over from the other side." "Lie down," the Kazakh said. Kolya lay down on a heap of felt, and I thought it would look better if I lay down a bit, too. It was the first roof we had had over our heads since our escape, but I was on hot bricks. I couldn't even lie still, let alone go to sleep. I felt as though we had betrayed ourselves, stepped into a trap with our eyes open.

The old man went out, wearing nothing but his underwear (otherwise I would have gone after him), and was away a long time. I heard whispering in Kazakh behind the curtain. Young men. "Who are you?" I asked. "Buoy keepers?" "No, we're from the Abai State Livestock Farm, number one in the republic." We couldn't have chosen a worse place. Where there was a state farm there was officialdom and police. And the best farm in the republic, at that! They must be really keen. . . .

I pressed Kolya's hand. "I'm off to the boat—come after me. With the briefcase." Out loud I said, "We shouldn't have left the provisions on the bank." I went through to the entranceway and tried the outer door; it was locked. That's it, then. I went back in, alerted Kolya by pulling his sleeve, and returned to the door. The carpenters had made a botched job of it, and one of the lower planks was shorter than the rest. I shoved my hand through, stretched my arm as far as I could and felt around. . . . Ah, there we were—it was held by a peg outside. I dislodged it.

I went out. Hurried down to the bank. The boat was where it had been. I stood waiting in broad moonlight. But there was no sign of Kolya. This was dreadful! Evidently he couldn't make himself get up. He was enjoying an extra minute in the warmth. Or else they had seized him. I should have to go and rescue him.

I climbed the cliff again. Four people were coming toward me from the house, Zhdanok among them. "Zhora!" he shouted. ("Zhora" again!) "Come here! They want to see our papers." He wasn't carrying the briefcase, as I had told him to.

I go up to them. A new arrival with a Kazakh accent says, "Your papers!" I behave as calmly as I can. "Who are you, then?" "I'm the commandant." "All right, then," I say reassuringly.

"Let's go. You can check our papers anytime. There's more light in the house there." We go into the house.

I slowly lifted the briefcase from the floor, and went over to the lamp, looking for an opportunity to side-step them and dash out of the house, and talking all the time to distract them: "Welcome to see our papers anytime, of course. Papers must always be checked in such circumstances. You can't be too careful. We had a case once in the Procurement Agency . . ." My hand was on the lock now, ready to undo the briefcase. They crowded around me. Then . . . I butted the commandant with my shoulder, he bumped into the old man, and they both fell. I gave the young man on my right a straight punch on the jaw. They yelled, they howled. "Makhmadera," I shouted, and bounded with the briefcase through the inner then the outer door. Then Kolya shouted after me from the entrance way: "Zhora! They've got me!" He was clinging to the doorpost, while they tried to pull him back inside. I tugged at his arm, but couldn't free him. Then I braced myself against the doorpost with my foot and gave such a heave that Kolya flew over my head as I fell to the ground. Two of them flung themselves on top of me. I don't know how I wriggled out from under them. Our precious briefcase was left behind. I ran to the cliff, and bounded down it! Behind me I hear someone say in Russian: "Use the ax on him! The ax!" Probably trying to scare us—otherwise they would be speaking Kazakh. I can almost feel their outstretched hands on me. I stumble, and almost fall! Kolya is in the boat already. "Good thing they didn't have a gun," I shout. I pushed the boat out and was up to my knees in water before I jumped into it. The Kazakhs were reluctant to get wet. They ran along the bank, yelling, "Gir-gir-gir!" I shouted back at them: "Thought you had us, didn't you, you bastards?"

Yes, it was lucky they had no gun. I made the boat race with the current. They bayed after us, running along the bank, until a creek barred their way. I took off my two pairs of trousers—naval and civilian—and wrung them out. My teeth were chattering. "Well, Kolya," I said, "we got warmed up, all right." He was silent.

It was obviously time to say goodbye to the Irtysh. At daybreak we must go ashore and thumb rides the rest of the way to Omsk. It wasn't so very far now.

The "katyusha" and the salt had been left behind in the briefcase. And where could we get a razor? It wasn't worth

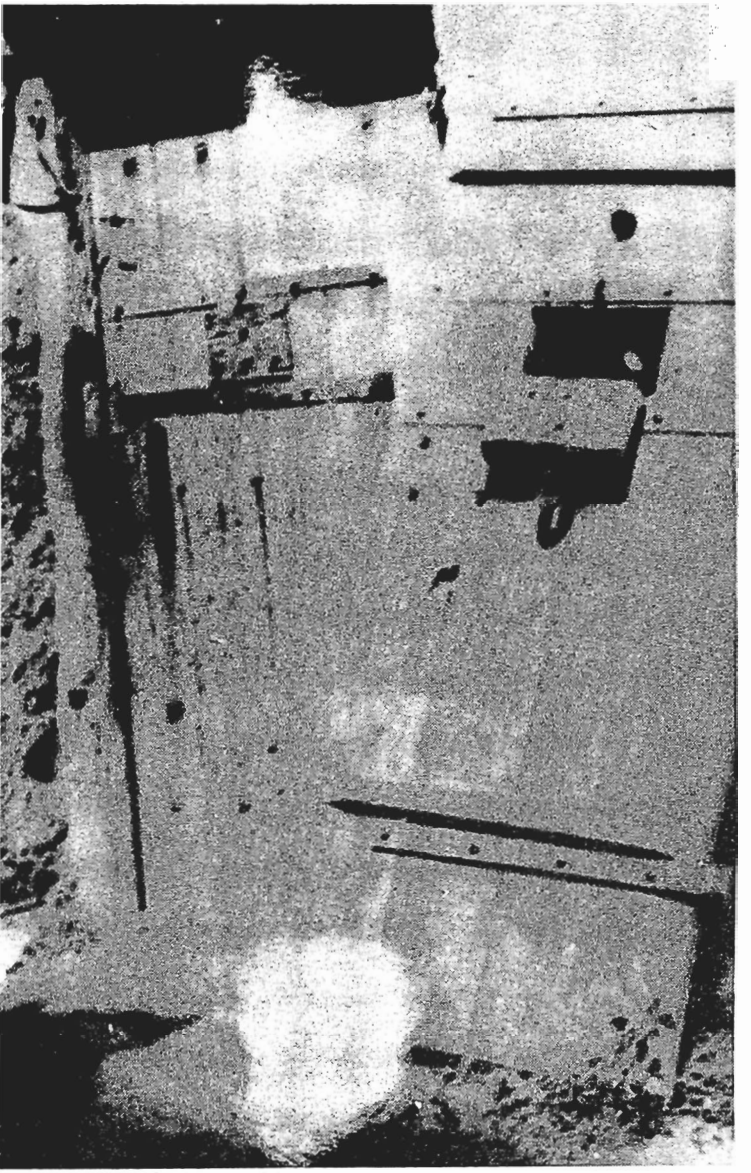
1. Relatives identifying the corpses of those executed at Vinnitsa.

I went right through Ekibastuz with the number Shch #232 until my last few months, when I was ordered to change it to Shch #262. I smuggled patches with this number on them out of Ekibastuz, and I have kept them to this day.

2. The author in 1953, right after his release from the special camp.

3. Body search.

4. Georgi Pavlovich Tenno.



5. The door to the Ękibastuzsky BUR (Disciplinary Barracks).

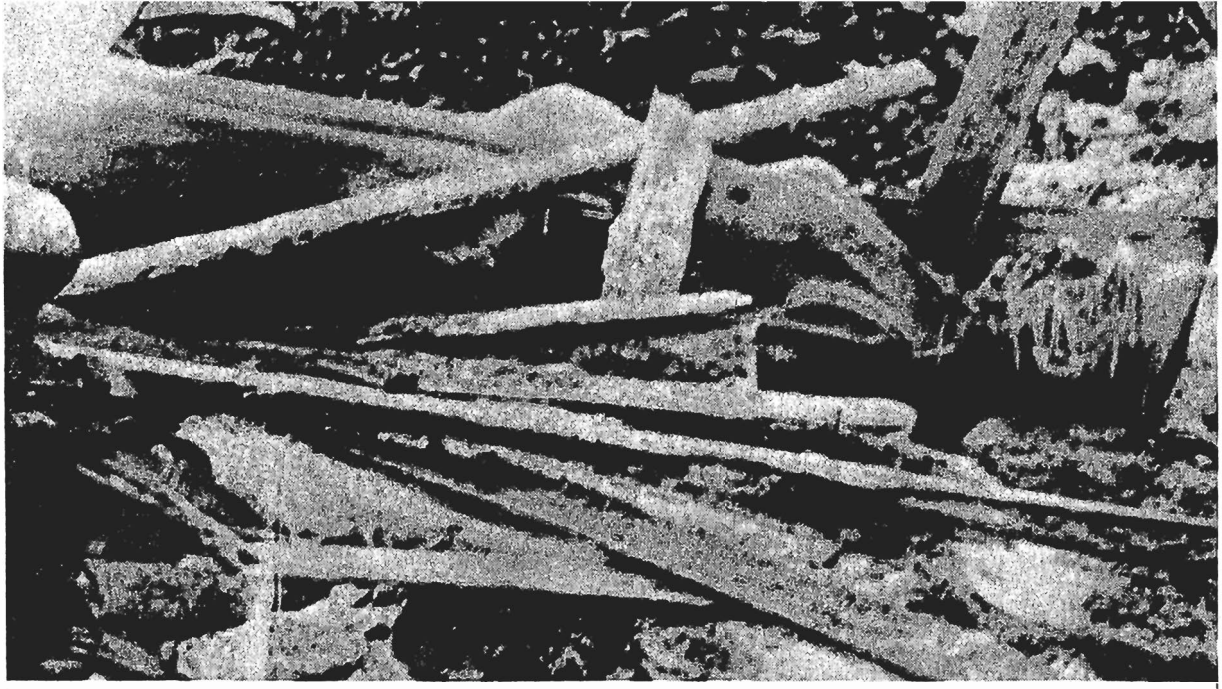
6. N. V. Surovtseva beside the hut.

7. VGS Barracks.

8. Kadat'skaya and her husband in their youth.

9. Kadatskaya in 1968.

10. Sculpture by Nedov.



11. On the Vorkuta dump. *Sic transit* ...

asking myself how we could dry our clothes. Look—on the bank there: a boat and a hut. Obviously a buoy keeper. We went ashore and knocked. No light came on. A deep male voice: "Who is it?" "Let us in for a warm-up! Our boat capsized and we nearly drowned." There was a lot of fumbling, then the door opened. In the dimly lit entrance a sturdy old man, Russian, stood to one side of the door, arms raised, threatening us with an ax. He could bring it down on one of us, and there would be no stopping him. I tried to reassure him. "Don't be afraid. We're from Omsk. We've been on business to the Abai State Farm. We intended to go by boat to the district center downstream, but there were nets in the shallows a bit higher up; we fouled them and turned over." He still looked suspicious and didn't lower his ax. Where had I seen him before, in what picture? An old man out of a folk tale, with his gray mane, his gray beard. At last he decided to answer: "You were going to Zhelezyanka, you mean?" Fine, now we know where we are. "That's right, Zhelezyanka. The worst of it is my briefcase sank and there's a hundred and fifty rubles in it. We bought some meat at the state farm, but we have no use for it now. Perhaps you'll buy it from us?" Zhdanok went to get the meat. The old man let me into the inner room, where there was a kerosene lamp, and a sporting gun on the wall. "Now we'll check your papers." I tried to speak as confidently as I could. "I always keep my documents on me; it's lucky they were in my top pocket or they would be soaked. I'm Stolyarov, Viktor Aleksandrovich, representing the Provincial Livestock Administration." Now I must quickly seize the initiative. "What about you?" "I'm a buoy keeper." "Name and patronymic?" Just then Kolya arrived and the old man didn't mention papers again. He said that he couldn't afford to buy meat but that he could give us a drink of tea.

We sat with him about an hour. He warmed up some tea for us on a fire of wood chips, gave us bread, and even cut off a piece of fat bacon. We talked about the navigation channels of the Irtysh, how much we had paid for our boat, where to sell it. He did most of the talking. He looked at us with compassion in his wise old eyes, and it seemed to me that he knew all about us, that he was a real human being. I even felt like confiding in him. But it wouldn't have helped us: he obviously had no razor—he was as shaggy as everything else in the for-

est. Besides, it was less dangerous for him not to know: otherwise it would be "You knew and didn't tell."

We left him our veal, and he gave us some matches. He came out to see us off, and explained which side we should keep to at which points. We pushed off and rowed quickly to get as far away as possible in our last night. They would be looking for us on the right bank, so now we hugged the left most of the time. The moon was hidden by our bank but the sky was clear, and we saw a boat following the steep wooded right bank, going downstream like ourselves, but not as fast.

Could it be an MVD operations group? . . . We were following parallel courses. I decided to brazen it out, rowed strongly, and came closer to them. "Hey, pal! Where are you headed?" "Omsk." "And where are you from?" "Pavlodar." "Why so far?" "We're moving for good." His voice, with its peasant "o" 's, was too uneducated for an operations officer, he answered unhesitatingly, and . . . he even seemed glad to see us. His wife was sleeping in the boat, while he spent the night at the oars. I looked in: it was more like an ox wagon, crammed with goods and chattels, heaped high with packages.

I did a bit of quick thinking. A meeting like this—on our last night, in our last hours on the river! If he's pulling up his roots they must be carrying provisions, and money, and passports, and clothing, and even a razor. And no one, anywhere, will wonder where they are. He's alone and there are two of us—his wife doesn't count. I'll travel on his passport. Kolya can dress up like a woman: he's small, has a smooth face, we'll mold him a figure. They must surely have a suitcase, to help us look like genuine travelers. Any driver we meet will drop us in Omsk this very morning.

Who ever heard of a Russian river without pirates? Fate is cruel, but what else can we do? Now that we have left a trail on the river, this is our last, our only chance. It's a pity to rob a workingman of his belongings—but who ever took pity on us? And who ever would?

All this flashed through my mind, and through Zhdanok's, too, in a moment. I only had to ask quietly, "Uh-huh?" And he quietly replied, "Makhmadera."

I get steadily nearer and am now forcing their boat toward the steep bank, toward the dark forest. I must be quick to prevent them from reaching the next bend in the river, in case the forest

ends there. I change my voice to one of authority and give my orders.

"Attention! We are an MVD operations group. Put in to shore. I want to inspect your papers!"

The rower threw down his oars: had he lost his head, or was he perhaps overjoyed to find that we were policemen and not robbers?

"Of course," he said. "You can inspect them here, or on the river."

"I said put in to the shore, and that's what you'll do. And be quick about it."

We got close to them. Our sides were almost touching. We jumped across, he scrambled with difficulty over his bundles, and we saw that he had a limp. His wife woke up. "Is it far now?" The young man handed over his passport. "What about your draft card?" "I was invalided out, wounded; I'm exempt. Here's the certificate." I saw a gleam of metal in the prow of their boat—an ax. I signaled to Kolya to remove it. He rushed too abruptly and seized the ax. The woman felt that something was wrong and set up a howl. "What's all that noise?" I said sternly. "Cut it out. We're looking for runaways. Criminals. And an ax is as good a weapon as any." She calmed down a little.

I give Kolya his orders.

"Lieutenant! Slip down to the observation post. Captain Vorobyov should be there."

(The name and rank came to me automatically—I'll tell you why: we had left a pal of ours, Captain Vorobyov, behind in Ekibastuz, confined to the cells for trying to escape.) Kolya understood: he was to see whether there was anyone around up top, or whether we could act. Up he ran. In the meantime I carried on questioning and inspecting. My suspect obligingly struck matches for me. I ran through their passports and certificates. His age was just right, too—the veteran was under forty. He had worked as a buoy keeper. Now they had sold their home and their cow. (He would have all the money with him, of course.) They were going to seek their fortune. They couldn't get there in a day, so they had set off by night.

A rare chance, an extraordinary chance, above all because no one would miss them. But what did we need from them? Did we need their lives? No, I had never murdered, and I didn't want to now. An interrogator, or an operations officer, when he was tor-

menting me—yes; but I couldn't raise my hand against ordinary working people. Should I take their money? All right, but just a little. How little, though? Enough for two tickets to Moscow, and some food. And some of their gear. That wouldn't ruin them. What if we left them their papers and the boat, and made a deal with them not to report us? It wouldn't be easy to trust them. And how could we manage without papers?

If we took their papers, they would have no choice but to report us. To prevent their doing so we must tie them up here and now. Tie them up well and truly so that we should have two or three days' head start.

But in that case wouldn't it be better simply to . . . ?

Kolya came back and signaled that everything was all right up above. He was waiting for me to say "Makhmadera!" What was I to do?

The slave camp of Ekibastuz rose before my eyes. Could I go back to that? Surely we had the right . . .

And suddenly—suddenly something very light touched my legs. I looked down: something small and white. I bent over; it was a white kitten. It had jumped out of the boat, and with its tail stiff as a stalk in the air, it purred and rubbed itself against my legs.

It didn't know what I was thinking. I felt as though the touch of this kitten had sapped my will power. Stretched taut for twenty days, ever since I had slipped under the wire, it suddenly seemed to snap. I felt that, whatever Kolya might say to me now, I could never take their lives nor even the money they had earned in the sweat of their brows.

Still keeping a stern face, I said, "Right, wait here; we'll soon see what's what."

We climbed the cliff. I had the papers in my hand. I told Kolya what I was thinking.

He said nothing. He disagreed, but he said nothing.

That's how the world is arranged: *they* can take anyone's freedom from him, without a qualm. If we want to take back the freedom which is our birthright—they make us pay with our lives and the lives of all whom we meet on the way.

They can do anything, but we cannot. That's why *they* are stronger than we. Without coming to an agreement, we went down again. Only the lame man was by the boat. "Where's your wife?"

"She was frightened; she ran off into the forest."

"Here are your papers. You can go on your way."

He thanks me, and shouts into the forest:

"Ma-ria! Come back! They're honest people!"

We push off. I row quickly. The ordinary workingman, the man with the bad leg, suddenly remembers and shouts after me:

"Comrade officer! We saw two chaps yesterday—looked just like bandits. If we'd known, we'd have held the rotters!"

"Still feel sorry for him?" asks Kolya.

I say nothing.

■

From that night—from the moment we went indoors for a warm-up, or perhaps when we met the white kitten—our escape began to go wrong. We had lost something: our confidence? our tenacity? our ability to think straight? the instinctive understanding between us? Now that we were nearly in Omsk we started making mistakes, pulling different ways. When runaways behave like that, they do not run much farther.

Toward morning we abandoned the boat. We slept through the day in a haystack, but uneasily. Darkness fell. We were hungry. It was time to stew some meat, but we had lost our bucket in the retreat. I decided to fry it. We found a tractor seat—that would do for a frying pan; the potatoes we could bake.

Nearby stood a tall hut, left behind by haymakers. In the mental blackout which had come upon me that day, I thought it a good idea to light my fire inside the hut: it would be invisible from all sides. Kolya didn't want any supper at all. "Let's move on!" Once again we couldn't see eye to eye.

I did light a fire in the hut, but I put too much wood on. The whole hut went up in flames, and I barely managed to crawl out. Then the fire jumped to the stack—the one in which we had spent the day—and it blazed up. Suddenly I felt sorry for that hay—so sweet-scented, and so kind to us. I started scattering it, and rolling on the ground in an attempt to put it out, to prevent the fire from spreading. Kolya sat aloof, sulked, and offered no help.

What a trail I'd left now! What a conflagration it was; the glow could be seen many kilometers away. What's more, this was an act of *sabotage.* For running away they would only give us the same *quarter* we already had. But for malicious destruction of kolkhoz hay they could "put us under" if they wished.

The worst of it is that each mistake increases the likelihood of further mistakes; you lose your self-confidence, your feel for the situation.

The hut had burned down, but the potatoes were baked. The cinders took the place of salt. We ate some of them.

We walked on in the night. Skirted a big village. Found a shovel. Picked it up in case it might be useful. We moved in closer to the Irtysh. And were brought to a halt by a creek. Should we make another detour? It was a nuisance. We looked around a bit and found a boat without oars. Never mind; the shovel would do for an oar. We crossed the creek. Then I strapped the shovel to my back, so that the handle would stick up like the barrel of a gun. In the dark we might pass for hunters.

Soon afterward someone came toward us and we stepped aside. "Petro!" he said. "You've got the wrong man; I'm not Petro."

We walked all night. Slept in a haystack again. We were awakened by a steamer whistle. We stuck our heads out, and saw a wharf quite near. Lorries were carrying melons onto it. Omsk is near, Omsk is near, Omsk is near. Time to shave and get hold of some money.

Kolya keeps on nagging me. "We shan't make it now. What was the good of running away in the first place if you're going to feel sorry for people? Our fate was in the balance, and you had to feel sorry for them. We shan't make it now."

He was right. It seemed so senseless now: we had neither razor nor money; both had been in our hands and we didn't take them. To think that after all those years longing to escape, after showing so much cunning, after crawling under the wire, expecting a bullet in the back any moment, after six days without water, after two weeks crossing the desert—we had not taken what was ours for the taking! How could I go into Omsk unshaven? How were we going to pay for the journey on from Omsk?

We lay through the day in a haystack. Couldn't sleep, of course. About five o'clock Zhdanok says, "Let's go right now and take a look around while it's light." "Certainly not," I say. He says, "It's nearly a month now! You're overdoing the caution! I'm getting out of this and going by myself." I threaten him: "Watch you don't get a knife in you." But of course I would never stab him.

He quieted down and lay still. Then suddenly he rolled out of the stack and walked off. What should I do? Let him go, just like that? I jumped down, too, and went after him. We walked on in

broad daylight, following the road along the Irtysh. We sat behind a haystack to talk things over: if we met anyone now we couldn't let him go in case he reported us before it was dark. Kolya carelessly ran out to see whether the road was clear, and a young fellow immediately spotted him. We had to call him over. "Come on over here, pal, and let's watch our troubles go up in smoke." "What troubles have you got?" "Me and my brother-in-law are on holiday, taking a trip on the river. I'm from Omsk and he's a fitter in the ship-repair yards at Pavlodar, and, well, our boat slipped its moorings in the night and got away, all we've got left is what was on the bank. Who are you, then?" "I'm a buoy keeper." "Haven't seen our boat anywhere, have you? In the reeds, maybe?" "No." "Where's your post?" "Over there"—he pointed to a little house. "So let's go to your place, and we'll stew some meat. And have a shave."

Off we go. But the house we'd seen turned out to be that of his neighbor, another buoy keeper, and our man's house was 300 meters farther on. More company—no sooner had we entered the house than the neighbor cycled over to see us, with his sporting gun. He eyed my stubble and questioned me about life in Omsk. Some good, asking a jailbird like me about life outside. I babbled something vague, the gist of which was that the housing situation was bad, the food situation was bad, and the consumer-goods situation was bad—couldn't go far wrong there, I thought. He looked sour and contradicted me—it appeared that he was a Party member. Kolya made soup—we must eat our fill while we could; we might not have another chance till Omsk.

It was a wearisome wait for darkness. We couldn't let either of them leave us. And what if a third came along? At last they both got ready to go and attend to their lights. We offered our help. The Party man refused. "I shall just set two lights and then I have to go to the village. I'm taking my family a load of brushwood. I'll look in again later." I signal to Kolya not to take his eyes off the Party man and at the slightest hint of anything wrong to dive into the bushes. I show him where to meet me. I go with our man. From his boat I inspect the lie of the land and question him about distances. We return at the same time as the neighbor. That sets my mind at rest: he hasn't had time to turn us in yet. Shortly afterward he drives up, as he had said he would, with a load of brushwood on his cart. But instead of driving on, he sits down to sample Kolya's soup. He won't go away. What are we to do? Tie

the pair of them up? Shut one in the cellar, tie the other to a bed? . . . They both have papers, and the neighbor has a bicycle and a gun. That's what life on the run does to you—simple hospitality isn't enough; you have to take more by force. . . .

Suddenly—the creak of rowlocks. I look through the window: three men in a boat, which makes it five to two now. My host goes out, and immediately returns for jerry cans. "Foreman's brought kerosene," he says. "Funny he's come himself; it's Sunday today."

Sunday! We had stopped reckoning by the day of the week—it wasn't the name that made one of our days different from another. It had been Sunday evening when we escaped. So that we had been on the run exactly three weeks! What was going on in the camp? The dog pack would have despaired of catching us by now. In three weeks, if we had torn off in a lorry, we could long ago have fixed ourselves up somewhere in Karelia or Byelorussia, got passports and jobs. Or, with a bit of luck, even farther west . . . How galling it would be to have to give in now, after three weeks!

"Right, Kolya—now we're stoked up, what do you say to a hearty crap?" We go out into the bushes and watch what is going on: our host is taking kerosene from the newly arrived boat, and the neighbor with the Party card has also joined them. They are talking about something, but we can't hear what.

They've gone. I send Kolya back to the house on the double. I don't want to leave the buoy keepers alone to talk about us. I myself go quietly to our host's boat. So as not to rattle the chain, I make an effort and pull up the post to which it is attached. I calculate how much time we have: if the foreman buoy keeper has gone to report us, he is seven kilometers, which means about forty minutes, from the village. If there are "red tabs" in the village, it will take them another fifteen minutes or so to get ready and drive over here.

I go into the house. The neighbor is still not ready to leave. He's entertaining them with his conversation. Very strange. So we shall have to take both of them at once. "What about it, Kolya—shall we go and have a wash before bedtime?" (We must agree on a plan.) The moment we go out we hear the tramp of boots in the darkness. Stooping, we can see against the pale sky (the moon hasn't risen yet) men running in line past the bushes to surround the house.

"To the boat," I whisper to Kolya. I run toward the river, slide

down the steep bank, fall, and reach the boat. Every second may mean the difference between life and death. But Kolya is missing! Where, oh, where can he have got to? I can't desert him.

At last he comes running along the bank in the darkness, straight toward me. "That you, Kolya?" A flash! A shot, point-blank! I do a swan dive—arms outstretched into the boat. Bursts of submachine-gun fire from the steep bank. Shouts: "We got one of them." They bend over me. "Wounded?" I groan. They drag me out and lead me off. I limp (if I'm injured they will beat me less). In the darkness I surreptitiously throw the two knives into the grass.

Up top, the red tabs ask my name. "Stolyarov." (Maybe I can still wriggle out of it somehow. I am reluctant to give my name —if I do, that's the end of my freedom.) They hit me in the face. "Name!" "Stolyarov." They drag me into the hut, strip me to the waist, tie my hands tightly behind my back with wire that cuts into me. They press the points of their bayonets against my belly. A trickle of blood runs from under one of them. The militiaman who captured me, Senior Lieutenant Sabotazhnikov, jabs his revolver in my face and I can see that it is cocked. "Name!" Resistance is useless. I tell them. "Where's the other one?" He wags his revolver, the bayonets bite deeper. "Where's the other?" I feel happy for Kolya. "We were together," I tell them. "Most likely he was killed."

A security officer with bright blue facings arrived, a Kazakh. He shoved me onto the bed with my hands tied and as I half-sat, half-lay there, began rhythmically striking me in the face—left, right, left, right, as though he were swimming. With every blow my head banged against the wall. "Where's your weapon?" "What weapon?" "You were seen in the night with a gun." So the night hunter we had seen had also betrayed us. "That was a shovel, not a rifle." He didn't believe me and went on hitting me. Suddenly there was no more pain—I had lost consciousness. When I came around someone was saying: "Don't forget, if any one of us is wounded, we'll finish you off on the spot!"

(They must somehow have sensed it: Kolya really did have a gun. It all became clear to me later: when I said "To the boat," Kolya had run the other way, into the bushes. His explanation was that he hadn't understood . . . but there was more to it: he had been itching to go his own way all day, and now he did so. Besides, he had remembered the bicycle. Taking his direction from the

shots, he rushed away from the river and crawled back the way he had come. By now it was really dark, and while the whole pack of them were crowding around me, he rose to his feet and ran. Ran and wept as he went, thinking they'd killed me. He ran as far as the second little house, the neighbor's. He kicked in a window and started searching for the gun. He fumbled around until he found it on the wall, and with it a pouch of cartridges. He loaded it. What he was thinking of, so he said, was whether he should avenge me. "Shall I go and take a few shots at them for Zhora?" But he thought better of it. He found the bicycle, and he found an ax. He chopped the door down from inside, put salt into a bag—I don't know whether this seemed the most important thing to him or whether he simply had no time to think—and rode off, first by a dirt lane, then through the village, straight past the soldiers. They thought nothing of it.)

Meanwhile I was put in a cart, still tied up, with two soldiers sitting on top of me, and taken to a state farm two kilometers away. It had a telephone, and it was from there that the forest ranger (he had been in the boat with the foreman buoy keeper) had summoned the red tabs. That's why they had arrived so quickly —because they had been phoned. I hadn't allowed for that.

A scene was enacted by myself and this forester which may seem unpleasant to relate but is typical of what a recaptured prisoner can expect. I wanted to relieve myself—standing up—and someone had to help me, in the most intimate way, since my hands were twisted behind my back. The Tommy-gunners felt that this was beneath them and ordered the forester to go outside with me. In the darkness we walked a little way from where the soldiers stood and as he was assisting me he asked my forgiveness for betraying me. "It's my job. I had no choice."

I didn't answer. How can anybody pass judgment? We had been betrayed by people with duties and people without. Everybody we met had betrayed us, except that old, old man with the gray mane.

I sit in a hut by the highroad, stripped to the waist and bound. I am very thirsty but they give me nothing to drink. The red tabs glare at me like wild beasts, and every one of them looks for an excuse to prod me with the butt of his gun. But here they can't very well kill me: they can kill you when there are only a few of them, and no witnesses. (Their rage is understandable. For so many days now they have been wading among the reeds, with no

pause for rest, and eating from cans, with never a hot meal.)

The whole family is in the cottage. The little children look at me curiously but are afraid to come nearer; they even tremble with fear. The militia lieutenant sits drinking vodka with his host, well pleased with his success and the reward it will bring. "Know who he is?" he says boastfully to his host. "He's a colonel, a famous American spy, a major criminal. He was running away to the American Embassy. They've murdered people and eaten them on their way here."

He may even believe it himself. The MVD will have disseminated rumors of this sort to catch us more easily, to make everyone denounce us. They're not satisfied with the advantages of power, weapons, speed of movement—they need the help of slander as well.

(Meanwhile Kolya rides his bicycle along the road past the cottage, with the rifle slung over his shoulder, as though he hadn't a care in the world. He sees a brilliantly lighted cottage, soldiers smoking and noisily talking on the veranda, and through the window, me, half-naked. And he pedals hard for Omsk. Soldiers will lie in wait all night around the bushes where I was caught, and comb them in the morning. Nobody knows yet that the neighboring buoy keeper's bicycle and gun have disappeared—he, too, has probably sloped off to brag over a few drinks.)

When he has reveled long enough in his success—an unheard-of success by local standards—the militia lieutenant gives orders for me to be delivered to the village. Once again they throw me on the cart, and take me to the lockup. (There's always one handy! Every village soviet has one.) Two Tommy-gunners stand guard in the corridor, two more outside the window! An American espionage colonel! They untie my hands but order me to lie on the floor in the middle of the room and not edge toward any of the walls. That is how I spend an October night: lying on the floor, the upper half of my body bare.

In the morning a captain arrives, and bores through me with his eyes. He tosses me my tunic (they'd already sold the rest of my things for drink). Quietly, and with one eye on the door, he asks me a strange question.

"How do you come to know me?"

"I don't know you."

"Then how did you know that the officer in charge of the search

was Captain Vorobyov? Do you know what sort of position you've put me in, you swine?"

His name was Vorobyov! And he was a captain! In the night, when we were posing as security troops, I had mentioned Captain Vorobyov, and the workingman whose life I had spared had reported it all carefully. And now the captain was having trouble! If the commander of the pursuit has connections with an escaped prisoner, it's not surprising that three weeks go by and still they can't catch him! . . .

Another pack of officers arrive, shout at me, and among other things ask about Vorobyov. I say that it's a coincidence.

They tied my hands with wire again, removed my shoelaces, and led me through the village in broad daylight. There must have been twenty Tommy-gunners in the escort party. The whole village poured out, women shook their heads, kids ran after me, shouting: "The bandit! They're taking him off to shoot him!"

The wire was cutting into my arms, my shoes fell off at every step, but I held my head high and looked openly and proudly at the villagers: letting them see that I was an honest man.

They were taking me this way as an object lesson, something for these women and children to remember (legendary tales would be told of it twenty years from now). On the edge of the village they bundled me into the back of a truck, bare and seatless, with splintering old boards. Five Tommy-gunners sat with their backs to the cab, so as not to take their eyes off me.

Now I must rewind all those kilometers in which we so rejoiced, all those kilometers which took us farther from the camp. By the roundabout motor road it came to half a thousand. They put handcuffs on my wrists, tightened them to the limit. My hands were behind my back, and I had no means of protecting my face. I lay there more like a block of wood than a man. But this is how they punish our kind.

And then the road became very bad. It rained and rained, and the lorry bumped over the potholes. At every bump the bottom of the lorry scraped my head and face, scratched me, drove splinters into me. Not only could my hands not protect my face, but they themselves were cut more severely than ever over the bumps, and it felt as though the handcuffs were sawing through my wrists. I tried to crawl to the side and sit there with my back propped against it. No good! There was nothing to hold on to, and at the

first big bump I was hurled across the floor, and found myself sprawling helplessly. Sometimes I was tossed and hit the boards so violently that I thought my insides would jump out. I couldn't stay on my back: it would tear my hands off at the wrist. I turn onto my side—no good. I roll over on my belly—no good. I try arching my neck so as to raise my head and save it from these blows. But my neck gets tired, my head droops, and my face strikes the boards.

The five guards watch my torment, unconcerned.

This trip will form part of their psychological training.

Lieutenant Yakovlev, who is riding in the cab, looks into the back at every stop and says with a grin: "Haven't escaped, then?" I ask permission to relieve myself, and he guffaws. "Go on, do it in your trousers; we don't mind!" I ask him to take off the handcuffs, and he laughs. "Lucky you weren't caught by the lad who was on duty when you went under the wire. You wouldn't be alive now."

The day before I had been glad that the beatings so far were "less than I had earned." But why damage your fists, when the back of a lorry will do it all for you? Every inch of my body was bruised and lacerated. My hands were being sawn off. My head was splitting with pain. My face was battered, full of splinters from the boards; my skin was in ribbons.[6]

We traveled the whole day and almost all night.

When I stopped struggling with the lorry, and ceased to feel my head banging against the boards, one of the sentries couldn't stand it any more, put a sack under my head, eased the handcuffs while no one was looking, and bending over me, whispered, "It's all right, hold on, we'll soon be there." (What prompted the lad to do it? Who was responsible for his upbringing? Not Maxim Gorky, and not his company political officer, that's for sure.)

Ekibastuz. A cordon. "Get out!" I couldn't stand up. (And if I had, they would have made me run the gauntlet to celebrate.) They let down the side, and yanked me out onto the ground. The camp guards, too, came out to have a look and a laugh at me: "Ooh, you *aggressor,* you!" somebody yelled.

They dragged me through the guardhouse and into the Disciplinary Barracks. They didn't shove me in solitary but straight into

6. Moreover, Tenno had hemophilia. He shrank from none of the risks of escaping, but a single scratch could have cost him his life.

the common cell so that anyone who fancied a bid for freedom could take a look at me.

In the cell I was lifted by gentle hands and placed on the upper bed platform. But they had no food to give me until the morning rations came.

That same night, Kolya was riding on toward Omsk. He avoided the traffic, and whenever he saw headlights, rode into the steppe and lay down. Then in some lonely homestead he squeezed into a henhouse, and gratified the urge which had haunted him all the time he was on the run—by wringing the necks of three hens and tucking them in his sack. The others started squawking, so he hurried away.

The irresolution which had made us so unsteady after our first mistakes tightened its hold on Kolya now that I was captured. Easily swayed and impressionable, he was fleeing now in desperation, unable to think clearly what to do next. He was incapable of realizing the most obvious of facts: that the disappearance of the bicycle and the gun would of course have been discovered by now, so that they no longer camouflaged him, and he ought to throw them away first thing in the morning as too conspicuous; and also that he should not approach Omsk from that side and by the highway, but after a wide detour, by wasteland and back ways. The gun and the bicycle should be sold quickly, and he would have the money he needed. But he sat for half a day in the bushes near the Irtysh, then yet again lost patience before nightfall and set off by footpaths along the river. Very probably his description had already been broadcast by the local radio station—they have fewer inhibitions about this in Siberia than in the European part of the country.

He rode up to a little house and went in. Inside were an old woman and her thirty-year-old daughter. There was also a radio. By an extraordinary coincidence, a voice was singing:

> From Sakhalin a convict fleeing
> By narrow tracks and hidden trails . . .

Kolya went to pieces and began shedding tears. "What are you so unhappy about?" the woman asked. Their sympathy caused Kolya to weep unashamedly. They began comforting him. "I'm all alone, abandoned by everybody," he explained. "Get married, then," the old woman said, whether in jest or in earnest. "My girl's

single, too." Kolya, more maudlin than ever, started taking peeps at the would-be bride. She gave the matter a businesslike twist: "Got any money for vodka?" Kolya dug out his last few rubles, but there wasn't enough. "Never mind, I'll give you more later." She went off. "Oh, yes," Kolya remembered, "I've shot some partridges. Cook the marriage feast, mother-in-law." The old woman took them. "Hey, these are hens!" "So it was dark when I shot them; couldn't tell the difference." "Yes, but why have their necks been wrung?"

Kolya asked for a smoke, and the old woman asked her daughter's suitor for money in return for some makhorka. Kolya took his cap off, and the old woman became agitated. "You're a convict, aren't you, with your head shaven like that? Go away while you're safe. Or else when my daughter comes back we'll turn you in!"

All the time the thought was going round and round in Kolya's head: Why did we take pity on free people there on the Irtysh, when free people have no pity for us? He took a Moscow jacket down from the wall (it was getting cold out of doors, and he was wearing only a suit) and put it on: just his size. The old woman yelled, "I'll hand you over to the militia!" But Kolya looked through the window and saw the daughter approaching with someone on a bicycle. She had already informed on him!

Only one thing for it—"Makhmadera!" He seized the gun. "Into the corner! Lie down!" he said to the old woman. He stood against the wall, let the other two come through the door, and ordered them to lie down. To the man he said: "And you give me your shoes, for a wedding present! Take them off one at a time!" With the gun trained on him, the man took them off and Kolya put them on, throwing away his wornout camp shoes, and threatened that he would wing anyone who followed him out.

Off he rode. But the other man dashed after him on his own bicycle. Kolya dismounted, and put the gun to his shoulder. "Stop! Leave the bike there! Get away from it!" He drove the man away, went over to the bike, broke its spokes, slit a tire with his knife, and rode on.

Soon he came out onto the highway. Omsk was ahead. So he just rode straight on. There was a bus stop. Women were digging potatoes in their gardens. A motorcycle carrying three workmen in jerkins tagged behind him. It drove on steadily for some time,

then suddenly went straight for Kolya so that the sidecar struck him and knocked him off. They all jumped off, piled on top of Zhdanok, and hit him on the head with a pistol.

The women in the vegetable garden shrieked: "What are you doing that for? What's he done to you?"

What, indeed, had he *done to them?* . . .

But who has done, and will yet do, what to whom is beyond the understanding of the common people. Under their jerkins all three turned out to be wearing uniforms (the operations group had been on duty round the clock day after day at the entrance to the city). The women got their answer: "He's a murderer." That was the simplest thing to say. And the women, trusting the Law, went back to digging potatoes.

The first thing the operations group did was to ask the penniless runaway if he had any money. Kolya said quite honestly that he hadn't. They started searching him, and in one pocket of his new Moscow jacket found fifty rubles. They confiscated it, drove to an eating house, and spent the lot on food and drink. They did, however, feed Kolya, too.

So we came to anchor in jail for a long time. We were not tried until July of the following year. For nine months we festered in the Disciplinary Barracks, except when we were dragged out occasionally for interrogation. This was conducted by Chief Prison Officer Machekhovsky and Security Lieutenant Weinstein. What the interrogators wanted to know was which prisoners had helped us. Who among the civilian personnel had "conspired with us" to switch off the lights at the moment of our escape? (We didn't, of course, explain that our plan had been quite different, and that the lights' going out had only been a hindrance to us.) Where was our rendezvous in Omsk? Which frontier were we intending to cross eventually? (They found it incredible that people might want to stay in their native land.) "We were running away to Moscow to the Central Committee, to tell them about illegal arrests, and that's all there is to it!" They didn't believe us.

Having failed to get anything "interesting" out of us, they pinned on us the usual escaper's posy: Article 58-14 (Counter-Revolutionary sabotage); Article 59-3 (banditry); the "Four-sixths" decree, Article "One-two" (robbery carried out by a gang); the same decree, Article "Two-two" (armed robbery with violence

endangering life); Article 182 (making and carrying an offensive weapon other than a firearm).

But this daunting array of charges threatened us with chains no heavier than those we wore. The penal practice of the courts had long exceeded all reasonable bounds and, on these charges, promised nothing worse than the twenty-five years which a Baptist could be given for saying his prayers, and which we were serving before we tried to escape. The only difference now was that when the roll was called we should have to say "end of sentence—1975" instead of "1973."

Hardly a palpable difference for us in 1951!

Only once did the interrogation take a menacing turn—when they promised to try us as economic *disrupters*. This innocent word was more dangerous than the hackneyed "saboteur," "bandit," "robber," "thief." This word opened up the possibility of capital punishment, which had been introduced about a year before.

We were "disrupters" because we had brought disorder into the economy of the people's state. As the interrogators explained it, 102,000 rubles had been spent on our recapture: some work sites had been at a standstill for several days (the prisoners were not marched out to work because their guards had been called off to join in the hunt); twenty-three vehicles had carried soldiers day and night about the steppe, and had spent their annual allotment of petrol in three weeks; operations groups had been dispatched to all neighboring towns and settlements; a nationwide search had been ordered, and four hundred pictures of myself and four hundred of Kolya distributed throughout the country.

We listened to this inventory with pride. . . .

Well, they sentenced us to twenty-five each.

When the reader picks up this book our sentences will probably still not be at an end.[7]

7. Before the reader could pick up this book, Georgi Pavlovich Tenno, athlete and theorist of athletics into the bargain, died on October 22, 1967, of a cancer which ran its course very quickly. Already bedridden, he lived barely long enough to read through these chapters and amend them with fingers which were beginning to lose their feeling. This was not the way he had promised himself and his friends to die! Once it had been his plan of escape that fired his passion; later it was the thought of death in battle. He used to say that he was determined to take with him a dozen murderers, first among them Vyachik Karzuby (i.e., Molotov), and, at all costs, Khvat (investigator in the Vavilov case). This would not be murder, but judicial execution, given that the law of the state protected murderers. "With your first shots you have already justified your existence," said Tenno, "and you

Another consequence of Tenno's escape attempt was that the concert party at the CES was disbanded for a year (on account of the ill-starred sketch).

Because culture is a good thing. But culture must serve oppression, not freedom.

gladly overfulfill the plan." But his illness came upon him suddenly, instantly robbing him of his strength and making it impossible for him to find a weapon. When he was already sick, Tenno went around posting copies of my letter to the Writers' Congress in different parts of Moscow. It was his wish to be buried in Estonia. The pastor was also an ex-prisoner —both in Hitler's and in Stalin's camps.

Molotov lives on in safety, leafing through old newspapers and writing the memoirs of a public executioner, while Khvat, too, is still peacefully spending his pension at 41 Gorky Street.

Chapter 8

■

Escapes—Morale and Mechanics

Escapes from Corrective Labor Camps, provided they were not to somewhere like Vienna or across the Bering Strait, were apparently viewed by Gulag's rulers and by Gulag's regulations with resignation. They saw them as only natural, a manifestation of the waste which is unavoidable in any overextended economic enterprise—a phenomenon of the same sort as cattle losses from disease or starvation, the logs that sink instead of floating, the gap in a wall where a half-brick was used instead of a whole one.

It was different in the Special Camps. In accordance with the particular wish of the Father of the Peoples, these camps were equipped with greatly reinforced defenses and with greatly reinforced armament, at the modern motorized infantry level (these are the units which will never lay down their arms even under the most general disarmament agreement). In these camps they did not keep any "class ally" type of prisoners,* whose escape could cause no great damage. Here it was no longer possible to plead that the men under arms were too few or their weapons too old. At the moment of their foundation it was laid down in the instructions for Special Camps that there *could be no escape* from them, because if one of these prisoners escaped it was just as though a major spy had crossed the frontier, and a blot on the political record of the camp administration and of the officers commanding the convoy troops.

But from that very moment 58's to a man started getting, not *tenners* as before, but *quarters*—i.e., the limit allowed by the Criminal Code. This senseless, across-the-board increase in severity carried with it one disadvantage: just as murderers were un-

deterred from fresh murders (each time their *tenner* was merely slightly updated), so now political prisoners were no longer deterred by the Criminal Code from trying to escape.

Besides, the people herded into these camps were not the sort who try to rationalize and justify the arbitrary behavior of camp authorities in the light of the One and Only True Theory, but sturdy, healthy lads who had crawled on their bellies all through the war, whose fingers were still cramped from clutching hand grenades. Georgi Tenno, Ivan Vorobyov, Vasily Bryukhin, their comrades, and many like them in other camps even without arms proved a match for the motorized infantry equipment of the new regular army guard.

And although there were fewer escapes from the Special Camps than from the Corrective Labor Camps (and anyway, the Special Camps did not exist for so many years), they were rougher, grimmer, more ruthless, more desperate, and therefore more glorious.

Stories told about them can help us to make up our minds whether our people really was so long-suffering, really was so humbly submissive in those years.

Here are just a few of them.

One attempt was made a year before that of Tenno, and served as the model for it. In September, 1949, two convicts escaped from the First Division of Steplag (Rudnik, Dzhezkazgan)—Grigory Kudla, a tough, steady, level-headed old man, a Ukrainian (but when his dander was up he had the temper of a Zaporozhian Cossack, and even the hardened criminals were afraid of him), and Ivan Dushechkin, a quiet Byelorussian some thirty-five years old. In the pit where they worked they found a prospecting shaft in an old workings, with a grating at its upper end. When they were on night shift they gradually loosened this grating, and at the same time they took into the shaft dried crusts, knives, and a hot-water bottle stolen from the Medical Section. On the night of their escape attempt, once down the pit each of them separately informed the foreman that he felt unwell, couldn't work, and would lie down a bit. At night there were no warders underground; the foreman was the sole representative of authority and he had to bully discreetly or else he might be found with his head smashed in. The escapers filled the hot-water bottle, took their provisions, and went into the prospecting shaft. They forced the grating and crawled out. The exit turned out to be near the watchtowers but outside the camp boundary. They walked off unnoticed.

From Dzhezkazgan they bore northwest through the desert. They lay down in the daytime and walked at night. Not once did they come across water, and after a week Dushechkin no longer felt like standing up. Kudla got him on his feet with the hope that there might be water in the hills ahead. They dragged themselves that far, but the hollows held no water, only mud. Then Dushechkin said, "I can't go on anyway. *Cut my throat* and drink my blood."

You moralists! What was the right thing to do? Kudla, too, could no longer see straight. Dushechkin was going to die—why should Kudla perish, too? But if he found water soon afterward, *how* could he live with the thought of Dushechkin for the rest of his days? I'll go on a bit, Kudla decided, and if in the morning I come back without water I'll put him out of his misery, and we needn't both perish. Kudla staggered to a hillock, saw a cleft in it and—just as in the most improbable of novels—in the cleft there was water! Kudla slithered to it, fell flat on his face, and drank and drank. (Only in the morning had he eyes for the tadpoles and waterweed in it.) He went back to Dushechkin with the hot-water bottle full. "I've brought you some water—yes, water." Dushechkin couldn't believe it, drank, and still didn't believe it (for hours he had been imagining that he was drinking). They dragged themselves as far as the cleft and stayed there drinking.

When they had drunk, hunger set in. But the following night they climbed over a ridge and went down into a valley like the promised land: with a river, grass, bushes, horses, life. When it got dark Kudla crept up to the horses and killed one of them. They drank its blood straight from the wounds. (Partisans of peace! That very year you were loudly in session in Vienna or Stockholm, and sipping cocktails through straws. Did it occur to you that compatriots of the versifier Tikhonov and the journalist Ehrenburg were sucking the blood of dead horses? Did they explain to you in their speeches that that was the meaning of *peace,* Soviet style?)

They roasted the horse's flesh on fires, ate lengthily, and walked on. They by-passed Amangeldy on the Turgai, but on the high-road Kazakhs in a lorry going their way asked to see their papers and threatened to hand them over to the militia.

Farther on they frequently came across streams and pools. Kudla also caught and killed a ram. By now they had been a *month* on the run! October was nearing its end; it was getting cold.

In the first wood they reached they found a dugout and set up house in it. They couldn't bring themselves to leave this land of plenty. That they settled in such surroundings, that their native places did not call to them or promise them a more peaceful life, meant that their escape lacked a goal and was doomed to fail.

At night they would raid the village nearby, filch a pot or break into a pantry for flour, salt, an ax, some crockery. (Inevitably the escaper, like the partisan, soon becomes a thief, preying on the peaceful folk all around him.) Another time they took a cow from the village and slaughtered it in the forest. But then the first snow came, and to avoid leaving tracks they had to sit tight in their dugout. Kudla went out just once for brushwood and the forester immediately opened fire on him. "So you're the thieves, are you! You're the ones who stole the cow." Sure enough, traces of blood were found around the dugout. They were taken to the village and locked up. The people shouted that they should be shot out of hand and no mercy shown to them. But an investigating officer arrived from the district center with the picture sent around to assist the nationwide search, and addressed the villagers. "Well done!" he said. "These aren't thieves you've caught, but dangerous political criminals."

Suddenly there was a complete change of attitude. The owner of the cow, a Chechen as it turned out, brought the prisoners bread, mutton, and even some money, collected by the Chechens. "What a pity," he said. "You should have come and told me who you were and I'd have given you everything you wanted!" (There is no reason to doubt it; that's how the Chechens are.) Kudla burst into tears. After so many years of savagery, he couldn't stand sympathy.

The prisoners were removed to Kustanai and put in the railroad jail, where their captors not only took away the Chechen's offering (and pocketed it), but gave them no food at all. (Didn't Korneychuk tell you about it at the Peace Congress?) Before they were put on the train out of Kustanai, they were made to kneel on the station platform with their hands handcuffed behind their backs. They were kept like that for some time, for the whole world to see.

If it had been on a station platform in Moscow, Leningrad, or Kiev, or any other flourishing city, everybody would have passed by the gray-headed old man, kneeling and manacled, like a figure in a Repin picture, without noticing him or turning around to look —publishing executives, progressive film producers, lecturers on

humanism, army officers, not to mention trade union and Party officials. And all ordinary, undistinguished citizens occupying no position worth mentioning would also have tried to go by without noticing, in case the guard asked their names and made a note of them—because if you have a residence permit for Moscow, where the shops are so good, you must not take risks. . . . (Easy enough to understand in 1949—but would it have been any different in 1965? Would our educated youngsters have stopped to intercede with his escort for the gray-haired old man in handcuffs and on his knees?)

The people of Kustanai, however, had little to lose. They were all either "sworn enemies," or persons with black marks against them, or simply exiles. They started crowding around the prisoners, and tossing them makhorka, cigarettes, bread. Kudla's wrists were shackled behind his back, so he bent over to pick up a piece of bread with his teeth—but the guard *kicked it out of his mouth.* Kudla rolled over, and again groveled to pick it up—and the guard kicked the bread farther away. (You progressive film makers, when you are taking shots of inoffensive "senior citizens"—perhaps you will remember this scene and this old man?) The people began pressing forward and making a noise. "Let them go! Let them go!" A militia squad appeared. The policemen had the advantage and dispersed the people.

The train pulled in, and the prisoners were loaded for transport to the Kengir jail.

Escape attempts in Kazakhstan are as monotonous as the steppe itself—but perhaps this monotony makes it easier to understand the most important thing?

There was another escape from a mine, also in Dzhezkazgan, but in 1951 this time: three men climbed an old shaft to the surface at night and walked for three nights. Thirst made them desperate, and when they saw some yurts two of them suggested that they should go over and get a drink from the Kazakhs. But Stepan ——— refused and watched them from a hill. He saw his comrades enter a yurt, and come out running, pursued by a number of Kazakhs, who quickly caught them. Stepan, a puny little man, went away, keeping to the low places, and continued his flight alone, with a knife as his sole possession. He tried to make for the northwest, but was continually changing course to avoid people—he preferred wild animals. He cut himself a stick to hunt gophers and jerboas: he would fling it at them from

some distance while they were sitting up on their hind legs by their burrows and squeaking, and he killed some of them in this way. He sucked their blood as best he could and roasted their flesh on a fire of dry steppe gorse.

It was a fire that gave him away. One day Stepan saw a Kazakh horseman in a big red-brown fur hat galloping toward him, and he barely had time to hide his shashlik under some gorse so that the Kazakh would not see what choice food he was eating. The Kazakh rode up and asked who he was and where from. Stepan explained that he worked in the manganese mine at Dzhezdy (free men as well as convicts were employed there), and was on his way to a state farm 150 kilometers away to see his wife. The Kazakh asked the name of the farm. Stepan chose the most plausible—"The Stalin State Farm."

Son of the steppes! Why couldn't you gallop on your way! What harm had the poor wretch done you? But no! The Kazakh said menacingly: "You sit prison! You go with me!" Stepan cursed him and walked on. The Kazakh rode alongside, ordering him to come quietly. Then he galloped off a little way, waving his arm and calling to his fellows. But the steppe was deserted. Son of the steppes! Why, oh, why could you not just leave him? You could see that he had hundreds of versts of steppe to cross, with nothing but a bare stick in his hands and without food, so that he would perish anyway. Did you need a kilogram of tea so badly?

In the course of that week, living on equal terms with the wild animals, Stepan had grown used to the rustling and hissing sounds of the desert: suddenly his ear caught a new whistling sound in the air, and he was not mentally aware of his danger but like an animal sensed it in the pit of his stomach, and leaped to one side. This saved him! The Kazakh, he realized, had tried to lasso him, but he had dodged the noose.

Hunting bipeds! A man's life for a kilogram of tea! The Kazakh swore and hauled in his lasso, and Stepan went on, warily taking care not to let his enemy out of his sight. The other rode up closer, coiled his rope, and flung it again. As soon as he had made his throw, Stepan rushed at him, struck him on the head with the stick, and knocked him off his horse. (He had barely strength enough for it, but he was fighting for his life.) "Here's your reward, friend!" Relentlessly, with all the savagery of one beast goring another, Stepan began beating him. But when he saw blood he stopped. He took both lasso

and whip from the Kazakh and scrambled onto the horse. There was a saddlebag with provisions.

Stepan was on the run for quite a while longer—another two weeks or so—but everywhere he went he religiously avoided his worst enemies: people, his fellow countrymen. He parted with the horse, tried to swim some river or other (although he couldn't swim!), tried making a raft of rushes (and of course couldn't do that either); he hunted, and got away from some large animal, perhaps a bear, in the dark. Then one day, tormented beyond endurance by hunger, thirst, and fatigue, and the longing for hot food, he made up his mind to enter a lonely yurt and beg something. There was a small enclosure in front of the yurt, with an adobe wall, and when he was already close to it Stepan belatedly saw two saddled horses standing there, and a young Kazakh, in a bemedaled tunic and breeches, coming toward him. He had missed his chance to run and thought he was done for. The Kazakh had stepped outside for a breather. He was very drunk, was delighted to see Stepan, and seemed not to notice his tattered and scarcely human appearance. "Come in, come in, be our guest!" Inside the yurt sat an identical young Kazakh with medals, and an old man: the two brothers, who had seen service at the front, were now both important people in Alma-Ata, and had borrowed horses from a kolkhoz to gallop over and pay their respects to their father in his yurt. These two young fellows had tasted war, and it had made human beings of them. Besides, they were drunk and bursting with drunken good nature (that good nature which, though he made it his business to do so, the Great Stalin never fully succeeded in eradicating). They were happy that another guest had joined the feast, though he was only a simple mineworker on his way to Orsk, where his wife was expecting a baby at any moment. They did not ask to see his papers, but gave him food and drink and a place to sleep. That sort of thing sometimes happens, too. . . . (Is drink always man's enemy? Does it not sometimes bring out the best in him?)

Stepan woke up before his hosts, and fearing a trap in spite of everything, he went out. No, both horses were just where they had been, and he could have galloped off on one of them immediately. But he was not the man to harm kind people—and he left on foot.

After a few more days' walking, he started meeting cars and lorries. He was always quick enough to get out of their way. At

last he reached a railway line and followed it until that same night he found himself near Orsk station. All he had to do was board a train! He had won! He had performed a miracle—crossed a vast expanse of desert all alone, with nothing but a homemade knife and a stick—and now he had reached his goal.

Suddenly by the light of the station lamps he saw soldiers pacing along the tracks. So he continued on foot along a cart track parallel with the railway line. He no longer troubled to hide, even when morning came: because he was in Russia now, his native land! A cloud of dust came toward him and for the first time Stepan did not run away from a car. Out of this first real Russian car jumped a real Russian militiaman. "Who are you? Show me your papers." Stepan explained that he was a tractor driver, looking for work. As it happened, a kolkhoz chairman was with the militiaman. "Let him be! I desperately need tractor drivers! How many people have papers down on the farm?"

They traveled all day, haggling as they went, stopping for drinks and snacks, but just before nightfall Stepan couldn't stand any more and ran for the woods, which were some 200 meters away. The militiaman rose to the occasion and fired!

Fired again! Stepan had to stop. They tied him up.

It may well be that his trail was cold, that they had given him up for dead, that the soldiers at Orsk had been lying in wait for somebody else, because the militiaman was for releasing him, and at the district MVD station they made a great fuss over him to begin with—gave him tea and sandwiches and Kazbek cigarettes, and the commandant questioned him in person, addressing him politely (you never know with these spies—he'll be taken to Moscow tomorrow, and might easily lodge a complaint). "Where's your transmitter? Been dropped here to make a map or two, have you—which service are you with?" Stepan was puzzled. "I've never worked in the geological service; I'm more of a miner."

This escape ended with something worse than sandwiches or even physical capture. When he got back to the camp he was beaten lengthily and unmercifully. Worn out and broken by all his sufferings, Stepan fell lower than ever before: he *signed on* with the Kengir security officer Belyaev to help him flush out would-be escapers. He became a sort of decoy duck. He gave one or two cellmates in the Kengir jail a detailed account of his escape, and watched their reactions. If there was any re-

sponse, any obvious hankering to repeat the attempt, Stepan ——— reported it to the godfather.

The incidental cruelties which mark any difficult escape attempt were seen vividly enlarged in a bloody and confused breakout, also from Dzhezkazgan and also in summer, 1951.

Six prisoners escaping by night from a pit began by killing a seventh, whom they believed to be a stool pigeon. Then they climbed an old prospecting shaft out onto the steppe. The six prisoners included people of very different stripe and they immediately decided to separate. This would have been the right thing to do, if only they had had a sensible plan.

But one of them went straight to the settlement where the free workers lived, right next to the camp, and knocked on the window of his woman friend. His intention was not to hide, to wait awhile under the floorboards or in the attic (that would have been very sensible), but simply to have a good time with her while it lasted (we recognize at once the characteristics of the professional criminal). He whooped it up for a day and a night, and then the following evening put on her former husband's suit and took her to a film show in the club. Some of the jailers from the camp were there, recognized him, and *collared* him immediately.

Two of the others, Georgians, thoughtlessly sure of themselves, walked to the station and got on the train to Karaganda. But from Dzhezkazgan, apart from cattle trails and escapers' trails, there is no other way through to the outside world except this one—toward Karaganda and by train. Along the line there are camps, and at every station there is a security post, so that they were both *collared* before they reached Karaganda.

The other three took the most difficult road—to the southwest. There were no people, but there was no water either. The elderly Ukrainian, Prokopenko, who had seen active service, had a map and persuaded them to choose this route, telling them that *he* would find them water. His companions were a Crimean Tatar turned into a criminal by the camps, and a foul, "bitching" thief. They went on for four days and nights without food or water. When they could stand it no longer, the Tatar and the thief told Prokopenko: "We've decided to finish with you." He didn't understand. "What do you mean, pals? Do you want to go your own way?" "No, to *finish* you. We can't all get through." Prokopenko started pleading with them. He slit the lining of his cap and took

out a photograph of his wife and children, hoping to stir their pity. "Brothers! Brothers! I thought we were all on our way to freedom together! I'll get you through! There should be a well soon! There's bound to be water! Hang on a bit! Have some mercy!"

But they stabbed him to death, hoping to quench their thirst with his blood. They cut his veins, but the blood wouldn't flow—it had curdled immediately! . . .

Another striking scene: two men bending over another on the steppe, wondering why he wouldn't bleed . . .

Eyeing each other like wolves, because now one of them must die, they went on in the direction which the "old boy" had pointed out to them, and *two hours later* found a well!

The very next day they were sighted from a plane and captured.

They admitted it all under interrogation, the camp got to know about it—and decided to avenge Prokopenko by *knocking off* the pair of them. But they were kept in a separate cell and taken elsewhere for trial.

You may believe, if you wish, that everything depends on the stars under which an escape begins. Your plans have been laid oh, so carefully, so very long in advance, but then at the crucial moment the lights go out in the compound and your chance of seizing a lorry goes up in smoke. Whereas sometimes when an attempt is made on the spur of the moment, circumstances fall into place as though made to order.

In summer, 1948, in Dzhezkazgan again, First Division (not yet a Special Camp), a dump truck was detailed one morning to take on a load of sand at a quarry some distance away and deliver it to the cement mixers. The sandpit was not a *work site,* which meant that it was not guarded and that the loaders—three long-sentence prisoners, one serving a *tenner,* the other two *quarters*—had to be taken on the lorry. Their escort consisted of a lance corporal and two soldiers, and the driver was a nonpolitical offender, a trusty. Here was a chance! But chances must be seized as quickly as they arrive. A decision had to be taken and a plan concerted—all in sight and hearing of the guards, who stood by while the sand was loaded. The biographies of all three were identical—and like those of millions at that time: first the front, then German prisoner-of-war camps, escape, recapture, punitive concentration camps, liberation when the war ended, and by way of thanks for it all—imprisonment by their own side. They hadn't been afraid to flee across Germany; what could stop them from

trying it at home? They finished loading. The corporal took his seat in the cab. The two soldiers sat to the front of the lorry, backs to the cab, with their Tommy guns trained on the convicts, who sat on the sand to the rear. As soon as they drove out of the quarry the prisoners exchanged signals, threw sand in the eyes of the guards, and piled on top of them. They took away their Tommy guns, and stunned the corporal with a blow from a gun butt through the cab window. The lorry stopped; the driver was almost dead with fright. "Don't be afraid," they told him. "We won't hurt you—you aren't one of those dogs! Dump your load!" The engine raced and the sand, that precious sand, worth more than its weight in gold because it had brought them freedom, poured onto the ground.

Here, too, as in almost all escapes—let history not forget it! —the slaves showed themselves more generous than their guards: didn't kill them, didn't beat them up, merely ordered them to remove their clothes and their boots, and released them in their underwear. "What about you, driver, are you with us or with them?" "You, of course—what do you think?" the driver decided.

To confuse the barefooted guards (this was the price of their clemency), they drove first to the west (on the flat steppe you can drive where you like), then one of them changed into the corporal's clothes and the other two into those of the soldiers, and they sped northward; they were all armed. The driver had a pass; no one could suspect them. All the same, whenever their path crossed a telegraph route they broke the wires to disrupt communications (they tied a stone to a rope, slung it over the wires to weigh them down, then tugged at them with a hook). This took time, but gained them more in the end. They tore on at full speed all day long until the odometer had clocked up 300 kilometers and the petrol gauge registered zero. They began sizing up passing cars. A Pobeda came along. They stopped it. "Sorry, comrade, we're only doing our duty. Please let me see your papers." VIP's, they turned out to be. District Party bosses visiting their kolkhozes, to inspect, inspire, or maybe just to eat beshbarmak. "Right, out you get! Strip!" Don't shoot us, the big boys implored. The escapers led them out on the steppe, tied them up, took their documents, and rolled off in the Pobeda. It was not till evening that the soldiers whom they had stripped earlier in the day reached the nearest pit, only to hear from the watchtower: "Don't come any nearer!" "We're soldiers like you." "Oh, no you aren't—not while

you're walking around in your underpants!"

As it happened, the Pobeda's tank wasn't full. When they had driven about 200 kilometers, the petrol ran out and there was nothing in the jerry can either. It was getting dark by then. They saw some horses grazing, managed to catch them although they had no bridles, and galloped bareback. The driver fell from his horse and hurt his leg. They suggested that he get up behind another rider. He refused. "Don't be afraid, lads, I won't rat on you!" They gave him some money, and the papers from the Pobeda, and galloped away. After the driver, no one ever saw them again. They were never taken back to their camp. And so the lads had left their *quarters* and their "ten-no-change" behind in the security officer's safe. The "green prosecutor" favors the bold!

The driver kept his word and did not give them away. He fixed himself up in a kolkhoz near Petropavlovsk and lived in peace for four years. Love of art was his undoing. A good accordionist, he performed in the kolkhoz club, then competed at amateur festivals, first in the district center, then in the provincial capital. He himself had practically forgotten his former life, but one of the Dzhezkazgan jailers was in the audience and recognized him. He was arrested as soon as he left the stage—and this time they slapped twenty-five years on him under Article 58. He was sent back to Dzhezkazgan.

■

In a category of their own we must put those escapes which originate not in a despairing impulse but in technical calculations and the love of fine workmanship.

A celebrated scheme for escaping by rail was conceived in Kengir. Freight trains carrying cement or asbestos were regularly pulled in at one of the work sites for unloading. They were unloaded within the restricted area, and left empty. And five convicts planned their escape as follows. They made a false end wall for a heavy boxcar, and what is more, hinged it like a folding screen, so that when they dragged it up to the car it looked like nothing more than a wide ramp, convenient for wheelbarrows. The plan was this: while the boxcar was being unloaded, the convicts were in charge of it; they would haul their contraption inside and open it out; clamp it to the solid side of the boxcar; stand, all five of

them, with their backs to the wall and raise the false wall into position with ropes. The boxcar was completely covered with asbestos dust, and so was the board. A casual eye would not see the difference in the boxcar's depth. But the timing was tricky. They had to finish unloading the train ready for its departure while the convicts were still on the work site, but they couldn't board it too soon: they must be sure that they would be moved immediately. They were making their last-minute rush, complete with knives and provisions—and suddenly one of the escapers caught his foot in a switch and broke a leg. This held them up, and they didn't have time to complete the installation before the guards checked the train. So they were discovered. A full-dress investigation and trial followed.[1]

The same idea was adopted by trainee-pilot Batanov, in a single-handed attempt. Doorframes were made at the Ekibastuz woodworks for delivery to building sites. Work at the plant went on all around the clock and the guards never left the towers. But at the building sites a guard was mounted only in the daytime. With the help of friends, Batanov was boarded up with a frame, loaded onto a lorry, and unloaded at a building site. His friends back at the woodworks muddled the count when the next shift came on, so that he was not missed that evening; at the building site, he released himself from his box and walked away. However, he was seized that same night on the road to Pavlodar. (This was a year after his other attempt, when they punctured a tire as he was escaping in a car.)

Escapes successful and escapes frustrated at the start; events which were already making the ground hot underfoot;[2] the deeply-thought-out disciplinary decisions of prison officers; sit-down strikes and other forms of defiance—these were the reasons why the ranks of the Disciplinary Brigade at Ekibastuz swelled steadily. The two stone wings of the prison and the Disciplinary Barracks (hut No. 2, near the staff building) could no longer hold them. Another Disciplinary Barracks was established (hut No. 8), specially for the Banderists.

After every fresh escape and every fresh disturbance, the regime

1. However, my wardmate in the Tashkent cancer clinic, an Uzbek camp guard, told me that this attempt—of which he spoke with reluctant admiration—had in fact succeeded.
2. See Chapter 10.

in all three Special Sections became more and more severe. (For the historian of the criminal world we may note that the "bitches" in the Ekibastuz camp jail grumbled about it. "Bastards! Time you gave up this escaping. Because you keep trying to escape, they won't let us breathe any more. You can get your mug bashed in for this sort of thing in an ordinary camp." In other words, they said what the bosses wanted them to say.)

In summer, 1951, Disciplinary Barracks No. 8 took it into their heads to escape all together. They were about thirty meters from the camp boundary and made up their minds to tunnel. But too many tongues wagged and the Ukrainian lads discussed it almost openly among themselves, never thinking that any member of the Bandera army could be an informer—but some of them were. Their tunnel was only a few meters long when they were sold.

The leaders of Disciplinary Barracks No. 2 were greatly vexed by this noisy stunt—not because they feared reprisals, as the "bitches" did, but because they, too, were only thirty meters from the fence, and had planned and made a start on a high-class tunnel before hut No. 8. Now they were afraid that if the same thought had occurred to both Disciplinary Barracks, the dog pack would realize it and check. But the Ekibastuz bosses were more afraid of escapes in vehicles, and made it their chief concern to dig trenches a meter deep around all the work sites and the living area, so that any vehicle trying to leave would plunge into them. As in the Middle Ages, walls were not enough, and moats, too, were needed. An excavator neatly and accurately scooped out trenches of this kind, one after another, around all the sites.

Disciplinary Barracks No. 2 was a small compound, hemmed in with barbed wire, inside the big Ekibastuz compound. Its gate was always locked. Apart from the time spent at the limekilns, the disciplinary regime prisoners were allowed outside only for twenty minutes' exercise in their little yard. For the rest of the time they were locked up in their barracks, and crossed the main compound only to and from work line-up. They were not allowed into the general mess hall at all; the cooks brought food to them in mess tins.

As far as they were concerned, the limekilns were a chance to enjoy the sun and rest a bit, and they took care not to overstrain themselves shoveling noxious lime. When on top of this a murder took place at the end of August, 1951 (the criminal Aspanov killed the escaper Anikin with a crowbar: Anikin had crossed the wire

with the help of a snowdrift during a blizzard, but had been recaptured a day later, which was why he was in the Disciplinary Barracks [see also Part III, Chapter 14]), the Mining Trust refused to have any more to do with such "workers," and throughout September the disciplinary regime prisoners were not marched out at all, but lived as if in a regular prison.

There were many "committed escapers" among them, and in summer twelve well-matched men had gradually come together in a safe escape team. (Mohammed Gadzhiev, leader of the Moslems in Ekibastuz; Vasily Kustarnikov; Vasily Bryukhin; Valentin Ryzhkov; Mutyanov; a Polish officer who made a hobby of tunneling; and others.) They were equals, but Stepan Konovalov, a Cossack from the Kuban, was nonetheless the leading spirit. They sealed their compact with an oath: if any one of them blabbed to a living soul, his number was up—either he would finish himself off or the others would stick their knives in him.

By then the Ekibastuz compound was already surrounded by a solid board fence four meters high. A belt of plowed land four meters wide followed the fence, and outside it a fifteen-meter forbidden area had been marked off, ending in a trench one meter deep. They resolved to dig a tunnel under this whole defense zone, so carefully concealed that it could not possibly be discovered before their escape.

A preliminary inspection showed that the barracks had shallow foundations, and that with so little space under the floorboards there would be nowhere to put the excavated soil. The problem seemed insurmountable. Should they give up the idea of escaping? . . . Then someone remarked that there was plenty of room in the loft, and suggested hoisting the soil up into it! At first thought it wasn't worth considering. Raise dozens and dozens of cubic meters of earth into the rafters, without attracting attention, through the living space of the barracks, which was constantly under observation, regularly inspected—raise it daily, hourly, and of course without spilling the merest pinch for fear of giving themselves away?

But when they thought of a way to do it, they were overjoyed, and their decision to escape was final. What helped them to decide was their choice of a "section," meaning a room. Their Finnish hut, originally intended for free workers, had been erected in the compound by mistake and there wasn't another like it anywhere in the camp: it had small rooms with three bunk beds wedged into

each of them (not seven, as everywhere else), so that each held twelve men. They selected a section in which some of their number were already living. By various means—voluntary exchanges, forcing out unwanted roommates, teasing and ridiculing them ("you snore too loud, and you———too much")—they shunted outsiders to other sections and brought their own team together.

The more strictly the Disciplinary Barracks prisoners were segregated from the camp at large, the more severely they were punished and bullied, the higher their moral standing in the camps became. Any request from the prisoners in the Disciplinary Barracks held the force of law for all in the camps. They now started ordering whatever technical aids they needed, and these were made on one or another of the work sites, carried, at some risk, past the "frisking" points, and passed with further risk on to the Disciplinary Barracks—in the dishwash soup, in a loaf of bread, or with the medicines.

The first things ordered and delivered were knives and whetstones. Then nails, screws, putty, cement, whitening, electric wire, casters. They neatly sawed through the grooved ends of three floorboards with their knives, removed the skirting board which held them down, drew the nails from the butt ends of these boards near the wall, and the nails which fastened them to a joist in the middle of the room. The three loosened planks they fastened widthwise to a lath underneath them, so that they formed a single slab. The main nail was driven into this lath from above. Its broad head was smeared with putty the same color as the floor, and dusted over. The slab fitted snugly into the floor, and there was no way of getting a hold on it, but they never once pried it up by inserting an ax between the cracks. The way to raise the slab was to remove the skirting board, slip a piece of wire into the little gap around the broad head of the nail—and pull. Every time the tunnelers changed shifts, the skirting board was replaced and taken out all over again. Every day they "washed the floor"—soaking the floorboards to make them swell and close up chinks or cracks. This *entrance problem* was one of the most important. The tunneling room was always kept particularly clean and in exemplary order. Nobody lay on a bunk with his shoes on, nobody smoked, objects were not scattered around, there were no crumbs in the lockers. Nowhere was there less reason for an inspecting officer to linger. "Very civilized." And on he went.

The second problem was that of the *lift*—from the ground to

the loft. The tunneling section, like all the others, had a stove. A narrow space into which a man could just about squeeze had been left between stove and wall: the idea they had was to *block up* this space—transfer it from the living area to the tunneling area. In an unoccupied section they dismantled completely one of the bunks. They used these planks to board up the gap, immediately covered them with lath and plaster, which they then whitewashed to match the stove. Could the warders remember in which of twenty little rooms in the barracks the stove was flush with the wall, and in which it stood out a little? In fact, they didn't even spot the disappearance of the bunk bed. The one thing the jailers might have noticed in the first day or two was the wet plaster, but to do so they would have had to go around the stove and crouch over a bunk—and there was no point in this, because the section was in exemplary condition! Even if they had been caught out in this, it need not have meant that the tunneling operation had failed: this was merely work they had done to beautify that section: the gap was always so dusty, and spoiled its appearance!

Only when the plaster and whitewash had dried out were the floor and ceiling of the now enclosed niche sawn through with knives, and a stepladder knocked together from the same cannibalized bunk bed placed there—so that the shallow space under the floor was connected with the spacious bower in the roof. It was a *mine shaft,* cut off from the gaze of their jailers, and the only mine for years in which these strong young men had felt like working themselves into a lather!

Can any work in a prison camp merge with your dreams, absorb your whole soul, rob you of sleep? It can—but only the work you do to escape!

The next problem was that of digging. They must dig with knives, and keep them sharp—so much was obvious—but this still left many other problems. For one thing, the *"mine surveyor's calculations"* (Engineer Mutyanov): you must go down deep enough for safety, but no farther than was necessary, must take the shortest route, must determine the optimum cross section for the tunnel, must always know where you are, and fix the right point of exit. Then again, the *organization of shifts:* you must dig as many hours as possible in every twenty-four, but without too many changes of shift, and taking care to be all present and impeccably correct at morning and evening inspections. Then there were *working clothes* to be thought of, and washing arrange-

ments—you couldn't come up to the surface bedaubed with clay! Then the question of *lighting*—how could you drive a tunnel sixty meters long in the dark? They ran a wire under the floor and along the tunnel (and still had to find a way to connect it up inconspicuously!). Then there must be a *signal system:* how did you recall the man digging at the far end of the tunnel and out of hearing, if someone entered the barracks unexpectedly? And how could the tunnelers safely signal that they must come out immediately?

The strictness of the Disciplinary Barracks routine was also its weakness. The jailers could not creep up on the barracks and descend unexpectedly—they always had to follow the same path between the barbed-wire entanglements to the gate, undo the lock, then walk to the barracks and undo another lock, rattle the bolt. All their movements could easily be observed—not, it is true, from the window of the tunneling room, but from that of the empty "cabin," by the entrance—all they had to do was to keep an observer there. Signals to the working force were given by lamps: two blinks meant Caution, prepare to evacuate; repeated blinks meant Danger! Red alert! Hop out quickly!

Before they went under the floor they stripped naked, putting all their clothes under pillows or under a mattress as they took them off. Once past the trap door, they slipped through a narrow aperture beyond which no one would have supposed that there could be a wider *chamber,* where a light bulb burned continually and working jackets and trousers were laid out. Four others, naked and dirty (the retiring shift), scrambled up above and washed themselves thoroughly (the clay hardened in little balls on their body hair, and had to be soaked off or pulled away with the hair).

All this work was already in progress when the careless tunneling operation from Disciplinary Barracks No. 8 was discovered. You can easily understand the annoyance, or rather the outrage, of the artists whose ingenious conception had been so insulted. But nothing disastrous happened.

At the beginning of September, after nearly a year in prison, Tenno and Zhdanok were transferred (returned) to this Disciplinary Barracks. As soon as he got his breath back, Tenno became restless—he must plan his escape! But however he reproached them with letting the best season for escape slip by, with sitting around and doing nothing, no one in the Disciplinary Barracks, not even the most committed and desperate escapers, reacted.

(The tunnelers had three four-man shifts, and a thirteenth man, whoever he might be, was of no use to them.) Then Tenno, without beating about the bush, suggested tunneling—and they replied that they had already thought of it, but that the foundations were too shallow. (This was heartless, of course: looking into the eager face of a proven escaper and apathetically shaking your head is like forbidding a clever hunting dog to sniff out game.) But Tenno knew these lads too well to believe in this epidemic of indifference. They couldn't *all* have gone rotten at once!

So he and Zhdanok kept them under keen and expert observation—something of which the warders were incapable. Tenno noticed that the lads often went for a smoke to the same "cabin" near the entrance, always one at a time, never in company. That the door of their section was always on the hook in the daytime, that if you knocked they didn't open immediately, and that some of them would be sound asleep, as though the nights weren't long enough. Or else Vaska Bryukhin would come out all wet from the room where the close-stool was kept. "What are you up to?" "Just thought I'd have a wash."

They were digging, no doubt about it! But where? Why wouldn't they tell him? Tenno went first to one, then to another, and tried bluff. "You ought to be more careful about it, lads! It doesn't matter if I spot you digging, but what if an informer does?"

In the end, they had a confab and agreed to take in Tenno and three suitable companions. They invited him to inspect the room and see if he could find any traces. Tenno felt and sniffed every inch of wall and floorboard, and found nothing!—to his delight and the delight of all the lads. Trembling with joy, he slid under the floor to work *for himself.*

The shift underground was deployed as follows: One man, lying down, picked away at the face; another, crouching behind him, stuffed the loose earth into small canvas bags specially made for the purpose; a third, on all fours, dragged the bags backward along the tunnel, by means of straps over his shoulders, then went under the floor to the shaft and attached them one by one to a hook lowered from the loft. The fourth man was up there. He threw down the empty bags, hauled up the full ones, carried them, treading lightly, to different parts of the attic, scattered their contents in a thin layer over the whole area, and at the end of the shift covered this soil with cinders, of which there were a lot in the loft. The team might change jobs in the course of the shift, but

did not always do so, because not everyone could perform the heaviest, utterly exhausting jobs: digging and dragging the soil away.

To begin with they dragged two bags at a time, but then they made it four. For this purpose they finagled a wooden tray from the cooks, which they towed along with the sacks on it. The strap went around the neck from behind, then passed under the armpits. Necks were rubbed raw, shoulders ached, knees were bruised; after a single trip a man was in a lather, and after a whole shift, you could pour him into a jug.

The digging had to be done in a very uncomfortable position. There was a short-handled shovel, which they sharpened every time. With this they had to cut vertical grooves to the depth of a bayonet thrust; then, semi-recumbent, with their backs against the fresh-dug earth, they had to gouge lumps of earth and throw them over their shoulders. The soil was sometimes stony, sometimes stiff clay. They had to go around the biggest stones, making a bend in the tunnel. An eight-to-ten-hour shift added not more than two meters lengthwise, and sometimes less than a meter.

The worst of it was the lack of air in the tunnel: your head swam, you fainted, you felt sick. So yet another problem had to be solved—that of *ventilation.* Air holes could be bored only upward—into that most dangerous area near the boundary fence, which was under constant surveillance. But without them breathing was impossible. They ordered a steel "propeller" blade, fixed a stick to it crosswise, so that they had something like a carpenter's brace, and bored their first hole to the wide world outside. A draft was created, and breathing was easier. (When the tunnel went beyond the fence and outside the camp, they made another hole.)

They were forever sharing their experience, advising each other how best to do things. And reckoning up how far they had gone.

The escape hole, or tunnel, plunged under the foundation wall, and from then on diverged from the straight only to avoid stones or because of inaccurate digging. It was half a meter wide and ninety centimeters high, and it had a vaulted roof. Its top, according to their calculations, was about 1.3 or 1.4 meters from the surface. The sides of the tunnel were reinforced with planks, and as they advanced the electric cable was extended and more and more electric bulbs were hung up.

If you looked along it, it was like an underground railway, a Gulag metro!

By now the tunnel had gone some dozens of meters, and they were digging beyond the boundary fence. Overhead the tramp of guards on their rounds, and the barking and whining of dogs, could be clearly heard.

When suddenly . . . one day suddenly, after morning inspection, before the day shift had gone below and (according to the team's strict rules) while nothing incriminating was visible, they saw a pack of jailers walking toward the barracks, with the short and short-tempered chief prison officer Lieutenant Machekhovsky at their head. The escapers' hearts sank. Had they been detected? Had they been sold? Or was it just a random check?

An order rang out: "Collect your personal belongings! Out, out of the barracks, every last man!"

The order was obeyed. All the prisoners were driven out and squatted on their haunches in the little exercise yard. From inside dull thuds were heard—they were stripping the planks from the bunks. "Get your tools in here!" Machekhovsky yelled. And the jailers dragged in their crowbars and axes. They could hear boards creaking and groaning as they were ripped up.

Such is the fate of the escaper! Not only would all their cleverness, their work, their hopes, their excitement go for nothing, but it would mean the punishment cells again, beatings, interrogations, fresh sentences. . . .

However . . . neither Machekhovsky nor any of the jailers ran out waving their arms in savage glee. They came out perspiring, brushing off dirt and dust, panting, not a bit pleased to have done all that donkey work in vain. A half-hearted order: "Step up one at a time." A search of personal belongings began. The prisoners returned to the barracks. What a shambles! The floor had been taken up in several places (where the boards had been badly nailed down or there were obvious cracks). In the sections everything had been tossed around, and even the bunks had been spitefully tipped over. Only in the *civilized* section had nothing been disturbed.

Prisoners not in on the secret were outraged: "Why can't they sit still, the dogs?! What do they think they're looking for?"

The escapers realized now how clever they had been not to stack piles of soil under the floor: they would have been spotted at once through the gaps in the boards. Whereas no one had climbed into

the loft—you could only escape from the loft with wings! In any case, everything up there was carefully covered with cinders.

The dogs hadn't nosed out the game! What joy! If you work stubbornly, and keep a close watch on yourself, you are bound to reap your reward. Now we know we shall finish the job! There were six or eight meters to go to the circular trench. (The last few meters had to be dug with special precision, so that the tunnel would come out at the bottom of the trench—neither higher nor lower.)

What then? Konovalov, Mutyanov, Gadzhiev, and Tenno had by now worked out a plan, to which the other twelve agreed. The escape would be in the evening at about ten o'clock, when the evening inspection had been carried out throughout the camp, the jailers had dispersed to their homes or gone off to the staff hut, the sentries had been relieved on the watchtowers, and the changing of the guard was over.

They would go down into the underground passage one by one. The last man would watch the camp grounds from the cabin till the others were down; then he and the last but one would nail the removable part of the skirting board firmly to the boards of the trap door so that when they let it fall behind them the skirting board also would fit into place. The broad-headed nail would be drawn downward till it would go no farther, and in addition to all this, bolts would be ready under the floor to fasten the trap door, so that it would not budge even if anyone tried to wrench it upward.

Another thing—before escaping they would remove the grating from one of the corridor windows. The warders, finding sixteen men missing at morning inspection, would not immediately conclude that they had tunneled their way out, but would rush to search the compound, thinking that the Disciplinary Barracks prisoners had gone to settle accounts with informers. They would also look in the other camp area, in case the missing men had climbed over the wall into it. It was a beautiful job! They'd never find the tunnel, there were no tracks under the window, and sixteen men had gone—carried by angels up to heaven!

They would crawl out into the peripheral trench, then creep along the bottom away from the watchtower (the exit from the tunnel was too close to it); they would go out to the road one by one; they would leave intervals between groups of four, to avoid arousing suspicion and to give themselves time to look around (the

last man would take another precaution: he would close the escape hole from *outside* with a wooden manhole cover smeared with clay, pressing it home with the weight of his body, and then covering it with earth; so that in the morning it would be impossible to discover any trace of a tunnel from the trench either.

They would go through the settlement in groups, making loud carefree jokes. If there should be any attempt to stop them, they would all join in resisting it, with knives if need be.

The general assembly point was a railway crossing much used by motor vehicles. There was a hump in the road where it crossed the tracks, and they would all lie on the ground nearby without being seen. The crossing was rough (they had seen it and walked over it on their way to work), the boards had been laid any old way, and lorries, whether carrying coal or empty, struggled across it slowly. Two men would raise their hands to stop a lorry as it was leaving the crossing, and approach the driver's cab from both sides. They would ask for a lift. At night drivers were more often than not alone. If this one was, they would immediately draw their knives, overpower him, and make him sit in the middle, while Valka Ryzhkov took the wheel, all the others hopped into the back, and—full speed ahead to Pavlodar! They could certainly put 130 or 140 kilometers behind them in a few hours. They would turn off upstream before they reached the ferry (their eyes had not been idle when they were first brought to these parts), tie the driver up and leave him lying in the bushes, abandon the lorry, row across the Irtysh, split up into groups—and go their different ways! The grain crop was being taken into storage just then, and all the roads were full of lorries.

They were due to finish work on October 6. Two days earlier, on the fourth, two members of the group were transferred: Tenno and Volodya Krivoshein, the thief. They tried reporting sick in order to stay behind at any price, but the operations officer promised to transport them in handcuffs, whatever their condition. They decided that excessive resistance would arouse suspicion. They sacrificed themselves for their friends and submitted.

So Tenno did not benefit from his insistence on joining the tunneling party. Instead of him, the thirteenth man would be his recruit and protégé, Zhdanok, who was by now far too unstable and erratic. It was a bad day for Stepan Konovalov and his friends when they gave in and told Tenno their secret.

They finished digging and ended in the right place. Mutyanov

had made no mistake. But there was snow on the ground, and they postponed their flight until it was drier.

On October 9 they did everything precisely as planned. The first four emerged successfully—Konovalov, Ryzhkov, Mutyanov, and the Pole, who was his regular partner in escapes involving engineering.

But the next to crawl into the trench was the hapless little Kolya Zhdanok. It was no fault of his, of course, that footsteps were suddenly heard up above and not far away. But he should have been patient, lain down, made himself inconspicuous, and crawled on when the footsteps had passed. Instead, in his usual smart-aleck way, he stuck his head out. He had to *see* who was walking up there.

The quickest louse is first on the nit comb. But as well as himself, *this* stupid louse destroyed an escape team equally remarkable for the cogency of their plan and for their ability to work smoothly together—ruined fourteen long and difficult lives whose paths had intersected in this escape. In each of these lives this attempt had a special importance; without it past and future were meaningless. On each of them people somewhere still depended—women, children, and children still unborn. But a louse raised its head, and the whole thing went up in smoke.

The passer-by proved to be the deputy guard commander. He saw the louse, shouted, fired. And so the guards, although the plan had been far too clever for them and they had no inkling of it, became heroes. And my reader the Marxist Historian, tapping the page with his ruler, asks me in his patronizing drawl:

"Ye-e-es . . . but why didn't you run away? Why didn't you revolt? . . ."

The escapers had levered back the grating, crawled into the hole, and nailed the skirting board to the trap—and now they had to crawl slowly, painfully back.

Who has ever plumbed such depths of disillusionment and despair? Seen such efforts so insultingly derided?

They went back, switched off the lights in the tunnel, fitted the grating in its socket.

Very soon the whole Disciplinary Barracks was swarming with camp officers, division officers, escort troops, jailers. All prisoners were checked against the records, and driven into the stone jail.

But they did not find the tunnel! (How long would they have searched if everything had gone according to plan?) Near the place

where Zhdanok had *broken cover,* they found a half-filled-in hole. But even when they followed the tunnel under the barracks, they could not understand how the men had got down there or where they had put the earth.

But the *civilized* section was four men short, and they gave the remaining eight a merciless *going over:* the easiest way for boneheads to get at the truth.

What point was there in further concealment? . . .

Later on, guided tours of the tunnel were arranged for the whole garrison and all the jailers. Major Maksimenko, the big-bellied commandant of the Ekibastuz camp, used to boast to other area commandants at Gulag HQ: "You should see the tunnel at my place. Like the metro! But we . . . our vigilance . . ."

No; just one little louse . . .

The hue and cry also prevented the first four out from reaching the railway crossing. The plan had collapsed! They climbed the fence of an empty work site on the other side of the road, walked through it, climbed the fence again, and headed out onto the steppe. They decided against waiting in the settlement to pick up a lorry because it was already full of patrols.

Like Tenno the year before, they quickly lost speed and faith.

They set off southwest, toward Semipalatinsk. They had neither provisions nor strength for a long journey on foot—in the past day or two they had strained themselves to the breaking point finishing the tunnel.

On the fifth day of their run they looked in at a yurt and asked the Kazakhs for something to eat. They, needless to say, refused and shot at these hungry people with a hunting rifle. (Is this tradition native to these shepherds of the steppe? And if not, where does it come from?)

Stepan Konovalov attacked a Kazakh, knife against gun, and took the gun and some provisions from him. They went on farther. But the Kazakhs tracked them down on horseback, came upon them near the Irtysh, and summoned an operations group.

After that they were surrounded, beaten to a bloody pulp, and after that . . . There's no need to continue. . . .

If anyone can show me any attempt to escape by nineteenth- or twentieth-century Russian revolutionaries attended with such difficulties, such an absence of support from outside, such a hostile

attitude on the part of the surrounding population, such lawless reprisals against the recaptured—let him do so!

And after that let him say, if he can, that we did not put up a fight.

Chapter 9

■

The Kids with Tommy Guns

The camps were guarded by men in long greatcoats with black cuffs. They were guarded by Red Army men. They were guarded by prisoner guards. They were guarded by elderly reservists. Last came the robust youngsters born during the First Five-Year Plan, who had seen no war service when they took their nice new Tommy guns and set about guarding us.

Twice every day, for an hour at a time, we and they shuffled along, tied together in silent and deadly brotherhood: any one of them was at liberty to kill any one of us. Every morning we dawdled listlessly along, we on the road and they on the shoulder, to a place where neither they nor we wished to go. Every evening we stepped out briskly—we to our pen, they to theirs. Since neither we nor they had any real home, these pens were home to us.

We walked with never a glance at their sheepskin coats and their Tommy guns—what were they to us? They walked watching our dark ranks all the time. It was there in the regulations that they must watch us all the time. Orders were orders. Duty was duty. Any wrong movement, any false step, they must cut short with a bullet.

How did they think of us, in our dark jackets, our gray caps of Stalin fur,* our grotesque felt boots that had served three sentences and shed four soles, our crazy quilt of number patches? Decent people would obviously never be treated like that.

Was it surprising that our appearance inspired disgust? It was intended to do just that. From their narrow footpaths the free inhabitants of the settlement, especially the schoolchildren and

their women teachers, darted terrified glances at our columns as we were led down the broad street. They showed how much they dreaded that we, the devil's brood of fascism, might suddenly go berserk, overcome the convoy guards, and rush around looting, raping, burning, and killing. Obviously such bestial creatures could conceive no other desires. And inhabitants of the settlement were protected from these wild beasts by . . . convoy troops. The noble convoy troops. A sergeant of convoy guards, inviting the schoolteacher to dance in the club we had built for them, could feel like a knight in shining armor.

These kids watched us the whole time, from the cordon and from the watchtowers, but they were not allowed to know anything about us; they were allowed only the right to shoot without warning!

If they had just visited us in our huts of an evening, sat on our bunks and heard why this old man, or the other old fellow over there, was inside . . . those towers would have been unmanned and those Tommy guns would never have fired.

But the whole cunning and strength of the system was in the fact that our deadly bond was forged from ignorance. Any sympathy they showed for us was punishable as treason; any wish to speak to us, as a breach of a solemn oath. And what was the point of talking to us when the political instructor would come at fixed intervals to lead a discussion on the political and moral character of the enemies of the people whom they were guarding. He would explain in detail and with much repetition how dangerous these scarecrows were and what a burden to the state. (Which made it all the more tempting to try them out as living targets.) He would bring some files under his arm and say that the Special Section had let him take a few cases just for the evening. He would read out some typewritten pages about evil doings for which all the ovens of Auschwitz would not be punishment enough—attributing them to the electrician who was mending the light on a post nearby, or to the carpenter from whom certain soldiers had imprudently thought of ordering lockers.

The political instructor will never contradict himself, never make a slip. He will never tell the boys that some people are imprisoned here simply for believing in God, or simply for desiring truth, or simply for love of justice. Or indeed for nothing at all.

The whole strength of the system is in the fact that one man

cannot speak directly to another, but only through an officer or a political instructor.

The whole strength of these boys lies in their ignorance.

The whole strength of the camps is in these boys. The boys with the red shoulder tabs. The murderers from watchtowers, the hunters of fugitives.

Here is one such political lesson, as remembered by a former convoy guard (at Nyroblag). "Lieutenant Samutin was a lanky, narrow-shouldered man, and his head was flat above the temples. He looked like a snake. He was towheaded and almost without eyebrows. We knew that in the past he had shot people with his own hands. Now he was a political instructor, reciting in a monotonous voice: 'The enemies of the people, over whom you stand guard, are the same as the Fascists, filthy scum. We embody the power and the punitive sword of the Motherland and we must be firm. No sentimentality, no pity.' "

That is how they mold the boys who make a point of kicking a runaway's head when he is down. The boys who can boot a piece of bread out of the mouth of a gray-haired old man in handcuffs. Who can look with indifference at a shackled runaway jounced on the splintery boards of a lorry; his face is bloodied, his head is battered, but they look on unmoved. For they are the Motherland's punitive sword, and he, so they say, is an American colonel.

After Stalin's death, then living in eternal banishment, I was a patient in an ordinary *free* Tashkent clinic. Suddenly I heard a patient, a young Uzbek, telling his neighbors about his service *in the army.* His unit had, he said, kept guard on beasts and butchers. The Uzbek admitted that the convoy guards were also somewhat underfed, and it enraged them that prisoners, like miners, got rations (if, of course, they fulfilled the norm by 120 percent) not much smaller than those of honest soldiers. It also enraged them that they, the convoy guards, had to freeze on top of watchtowers in the winter (in sheepskin coats down to their heels, it's true), while the enemies of the people, once they entered the working area, scattered about the warming-up shacks (even from the watchtower he could have seen that it was not so) and slept there all day (he seriously imagined that the state's treatment of its enemies was philanthropic).

Here was an interesting opportunity—to look at a Special Camp through the eyes of a convoy guard! I began asking what kind of reptiles they were and whether my Uzbek friend had talked to

them personally. And of course he told me that he had learned all this from political officers, that they had even had "cases" read out to them in their political indoctrination sessions. And his malicious misconceptions about prisoners sleeping all day had of course been reinforced in him by the approving nods of officers.

Woe unto you that cause these little ones to stumble. Better for you had you never been born! . . .

The Uzbek also told us that a private in the MVD troops received 230 rubles a month. (Twelve times more than he would in the army! Why such generosity? Perhaps his service was twelve times more difficult?) And in the polar regions as much as 400 rubles for a fixed period of service, and with all expenses covered.

He further told us of a number of incidents. Once, for instance, one of his comrades was marching in convoy and fancied that somebody *was about to* run out of the column. He pressed his trigger and killed *five* prisoners with a single burst. Since all the other guards later testified that the column had been moving quietly along, this soldier incurred a terrible punishment: for killing five people he was put in detention for fifteen days (in a warm guardhouse, of course).

But which of the Archipelago's inhabitants has no stories of this sort to tell! . . . We knew so many of them in the Corrective Labor Camps. On a work site which had no fence but an invisible boundary line, a shot rang out and a prisoner fell dead: he had stepped over the line, they said. He may have done nothing of the sort—the line was invisible, remember—but no one else would hurry over to check, for fear of lying beside him. Nor would a commission come to verify where the dead man's feet were lying. Perhaps, though, he had overstepped the line—after all, the guards could keep their eyes on it, whereas the prisoners had to work. The most conscientious prisoner, the prisoner with thoughts for nothing but his work, is the one most likely to be shot in this way. At Novochunka station (Ozerlag), haymaking, a prisoner sees a little more hay two or three steps away and like a thrifty peasant decides to rake it in. A bullet! And the soldier gets . . . a month's leave!

Sometimes a particular guard is angry with a particular prisoner (for refusing to do him a favor, or failing to make something ordered), and avenges himself with a bullet. Sometimes it is done treacherously: the guard orders the prisoner to fetch something from beyond the boundary line. The prisoner goes off unsuspectingly—and the guard shoots. Or perhaps he tosses him a cigarette

—here, have a smoke! Even a cigarette will serve as bait for a prisoner, contemptible creature that he is.

Why do they shoot? Sometimes there's no answer. In Kengir, for instance, in a tightly organized camp, in broad daylight when there was not the faintest possibility of an escape, a girl called Lida, a Western Ukrainian, contrived to wash her stockings in working hours and put them out to dry on the sloping ground of the camp fringe area. The man on the tower took aim and killed her outright. (There was some vague rumor that he tried to commit suicide afterward.)

Why? Because the man has a gun! Because one man has the arbitrary power to kill or not to kill another.

What's more—it pays! The bosses are always on your side. They'll never punish you for killing somebody. On the contrary, they'll commend you, reward you, and the quicker you are on the trigger—bring him down when he's only put half a foot wrong—the more vigilant you are seen to be, the higher your reward! A month's pay. A month's leave. (Put yourself in the position of HQ: what sort of division is it that can point to no display of vigilance? What is wrong with its officers? Or perhaps the zeks are so docile that the guard can be reduced? A security system once created *needs deaths!*)

Indeed, a sort of competition springs up between sharpshooters: you killed somebody and bought butter with your prize money, so I'll kill somebody and buy butter, too. Want to pop home and paw your girl a bit? Just plug that gray thing over there and away you go for a month.

These were all cases of a kind familiar to us in the Corrective Labor Camps. But in the Special Camps there were novelties: shooting straight into a marching column, for instance, as the Uzbek's comrade did. Or as they did at the guardhouse in Ozerlag on September 8, 1952. Or shooting from the towers into the camp area.

It meant that they'd been trained to it. This was the work of the political officers.

In Kengir in May, 1953, these kids with Tommy guns suddenly and without provocation opened fire on a column which had halted outside the camp and was waiting to be searched on entry. Sixteen were wounded—but these were no ordinary wounds. The guards were using dumdum bullets, which capitalists and socialists had long ago joined in banning. The bullets left craters in their

bodies, tore holes in their entrails and their jaws, mangled their extremities.

Now, why should convoy guards at a Special Camp be armed with *dumdum* bullets? On *whose* authority? We shall never know. . . .

All the same, they were very hurt when they read in my story that prisoners called their escort troops "screws," saw the word repeated for all the world to hear. No, no, the prisoners should have loved them and called them guardian angels!

One of these youngsters—one of the better ones, it's true, who didn't take offense but wants to defend the truth as he sees it—is Vladilen Zadorny, born 1933, served in the MVD troops (Infantry Guard Unit) at Nyroblag from the age of eighteen to the age of twenty. He has written me several letters.

Boys did not join of their own wish—they were called up by the Commissariat of War. The Commissariat passed them on to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The boys were taught to shoot and stand guard. The boys cried with the cold at night. What the hell did they want with places like Nyroblag and all that they contained. You mustn't blame the lads—they were soldiers, serving their Motherland, and although there were things they didn't understand about this absurd and dreadful form of service [*How much, then, did they understand?* . . . It's either all or nothing—A.S.], they had taken their oath. Their service was not easy.

That is frank and honest. There is something to think about here. These lads were shut up inside a picket fence of words: Remember your oath! Serving your Motherland! You're soldiers now!

Yes, but their underlying common humanity must have been weak, or altogether lacking, if it was not proof against an oath and a few political discussion periods. Not every generation, and not every people, is of the stuff from which such boys are fashioned.

This is surely the main problem of the twentieth century: is it permissible merely to carry out orders and commit one's conscience to someone else's keeping? Can a man do without ideas of his own about good and evil, and merely derive them from the printed instructions and verbal orders of his superiors? Oaths! Those solemn pledges pronounced with a tremor in the voice and intended to defend the people against evildoers: see how easily they can be misdirected to the service of evildoers and against the people!

Let us remember what Vasily Vlasov meant to say to his executioner back in 1937. "It is your fault! You alone are to blame that they kill people! My death is on your head *alone,* and you must live with that! If there were no executioners, there would be no executions!"

If there were no convoy troops, there would be no camps.

Of course, neither our contemporaries nor history will ignore the hierarchy of guilt. Of course, it is obvious to all that their officers were more guilty; the security officers more guilty still; those who drew up the orders and instructions even more guilty, and those who ordered them to be drawn up most guilty of all.[1]

But shots were fired, camps were guarded, Tommy guns were held at the ready, not by them, but by those boys! Men were kicked about the head as they lay on the ground—by no one else, by those boys!

Vladilen writes also:

They dinned into us, they forced us to learn by heart USO 43SS—the 1943 Regulations of the Infantry Prison Guard (Top Secret)[2]—a cruel and frightening document. Then there was the oath. Then we had to heed the security officers and political officers. There was slander and denunciations. Cases were trumped up against some of the soldiers themselves. . . . Divided as they were by the stockade and the barbed wire, the men in the overall jackets and the men in greatcoats were equally prisoners —the former for twenty-five years, the latter for three.

It is putting it rather strongly to say that the infantrymen were also *imprisoned,* only not by a military tribunal, but by the Commissariat of War. *Equally* prisoners they were not—because the people in greatcoats could freely cut down with their Tommy guns people in work jackets, mow down a crowd of them, indeed, as we shall soon see.

Vladilen further explains that:

1. This does not mean that they will be brought to trial. Someone should ascertain whether they are satisfied with their pensions and dachas.

2. I wonder, by the way, whether we are fully aware of the part which this sinister double sibilant plays in our lives, in one abbreviation after another, beginning with KPSS [CPSU —Communist Party of the Soviet Union—Trans.], and KPSS-ovtsy [Party members]. Here we find that the regulations, too, were SS [*sovershenno sekretny*—top secret—Trans.], as is everything excessively secret. Obviously, those who drafted these regulations were conscious of their foulness, but drafted them nonetheless—and at what a time: we had just driven the Germans back from Stalingrad! One more fruit of the people's victory.

The lads were of all sorts. There were blinkered old sweats who hated zeks. Incidentally, the new recruits from some ethnic minorities—Bashkir, Buryat, Yakut—were very keen. Then there were those who just didn't care—the majority. They performed their service quietly and uncomplainingly. What they liked best was the tear-off calendar and post time. Finally there were decent chaps who felt sorry for the zeks as victims of misfortune. And most of us realized that our service was unpopular with the people. When we went on leave we did not wear uniforms.

Vladilen's own life story is his best argument in support of his ideas; though we must remember that there were very few like him.

He was allowed into the convoy guard service by an oversight on the part of a lazy Special Section. His stepfather, the old trade union official Voinino, had been arrested in 1937, and his mother expelled from the Party as a result. His father, who had commanded a Cheka squad, and had been a Party member since 1917, made haste to disown both his former wife and his son (and so he kept his Party card, but he was nevertheless demoted).[3] His mother tried to wash away her stain as a blood donor during the war. (It was all right; Party members and non-Party members alike took her blood.) The boy "had hated the bluecaps* from childhood, and now they put one on my own head. . . . The terrible night when people in my father's uniform roughly searched my cot had left too deep a mark in my young memory."

I was not a good convoy guard: I used to get into conversation with the zeks and do them favors. I would leave my rifle by the campfire while I went to buy things for them at the stall or post their letters. I daresay that there were people at the Intermediate, Mysakort, and Parma Separate Camp Sites who still remembered Private Volodya. A prisoner foreman told me: "If you look at people and hear their troubles you will understand. . . ." I saw my grandfather, my uncle, my aunt in every one of the political prisoners. . . . I simply hated my officers. I grumbled and complained and told the other soldiers: "There are the real enemies of the people!" For this, for open insubordination ("sabotage"), and for consorting with a zek, I was sent for interrogation. . . . Lanky Samutin . . . whipped me across the face, rapped my knuckles with a paperweight . . . because I would not give him a signed confession that I had posted

3. Although we have long ago learned to expect anything, there are still a few surprises left: because his abandoned wife's second husband is arrested, must a man disown his four-year-old son? And not just any man, but a squad commander in the Cheka?

letters for zeks. I would have squelched that tapeworm—I'm a silver medalist at boxing; I could cross myself with an eighty-pound weight—but there were two warders hanging on to me. . . . Still, the interrogators had other things on their minds—the MVD in 1953 didn't know whether it was coming or going. They didn't put me inside—they just gave me a dishonorable discharge under Article 47-G: "Discharged from the organs of the MVD for extreme insubordination and gross breaches of MVD regulations." Then they threw me out of the divisional guardhouse, beaten up and frozen, to make my way home. . . . Arsen, a foreman, released at this time, looked after me on the way.

Let us imagine that a convoy guard *officer* wanted to show the prisoners some leniency. He could, of course, only do it through his soldiers and in their presence. Which means that, given the general savagery, it would be "embarrassing" and in fact impossible. Besides, someone would immediately inform on him.

That's the system for you!

Chapter 10

■

Behind the Wire the Ground Is Burning

No, the surprising thing is not that mutinies and risings did not occur in the camps, but that in spite of everything they *did.*

Like all embarrassing events in our history—which means three-quarters of what really happened—these mutinies have been neatly cut out, and the gap hidden with an invisible join. Those who took part in them have been destroyed, and even remote witnesses frightened into silence; the reports of those who suppressed them have been burned or hidden in safes within safes within safes—so that the risings have already become a myth, although some of them happened only fifteen and others only ten years ago. (No wonder some say that there was no Christ, no Buddha, no Mohammed. There you're dealing in thousands of years. . . .)

When it can no longer disturb any living person, historians will be given access to what is left of the documents, archaeologists will do a little digging, heat something in a laboratory, and the dates, locations, contours of these risings, with the names of their leaders, will come to light.

We shall see the first outbreaks, like the Retyunin affair of January, 1942, in the Osh-Kurye Separate Camp Site near Ust-Usy. Retyunin is said to have been a free employee, perhaps even in charge of this detachment. He sounded the call to the 58's and the socially harmful (Article 7, Section 35) and rallied a few hundred volunteers. They disarmed the convoy (which consisted of short-sentence prisoner guards) and escaped with some horses

into the forest, to live as partisans. They were killed off gradually. In spring, 1945, people who had no connection with it at all were still being jailed for the Retyunin affair.

Perhaps we (no, not we ourselves) shall learn at the same time about the legendary rising in 1948 at public works site No. 501, where the Sivaya Maska–Salekhard railway was under construction. It was legendary because everybody in the camps talked about it in whispers, but no one really knew anything. Legendary also because it broke out not in the Special Camp system, where the mood and the grounds for it by now existed, but in a Corrective Labor Camp, where people were isolated from each other by fear of informers and trampled under foot by thieves, where even their right to be "politicals" was spat upon, and where a prison mutiny therefore seemed inconceivable.

According to the rumors, it was all the work of ex-soldiers (recent ex-soldiers!). It could not have been otherwise. Without them the 58's lacked stamina, spirit, and leadership. But these young men (hardly any of them over thirty) were officers and enlisted men from our fighting armies, or their fellows who had been prisoners of war; among these some had been with Vlasov or Krasnov, or in the nationalist units. There were men who had fought against each other, but here oppression united them. These young men who had served on all fronts in a world war, who were expert in modern infantry warfare, camouflage, and picking off patrols—these young men, except those who were scattered singly, still retained in 1948 their wartime élan and belief in themselves, and they could not accept the idea that men like themselves, whole battalions of them, should meekly die. Even escape seemed to them a contemptible half-measure, rather like deserting one by one instead of facing the enemy together.

It was all planned and begun in one particular team. An ex-colonel called Voronin or Voronov, a one-eyed man, is said to have been the leader. A first lieutenant of armored troops, Sakurenko, is also mentioned. The team killed their convoy guards (in those days convoy guards, often unlike their charges, were not real soldiers, but reservists). Then they went and freed a second team, and a third. They attacked the convoy guards' hamlet, then the camp from outside, removed the sentries from the towers, and opened up the camp area. (The inevitable schism now took place: though the gates were wide open, most of the zeks would not go through them. These included prisoners with short sentences who

had nothing to gain from mutiny. There were others with *tenners*, or even with fifteen years under the "Seven-eighths" and "Four-sixths" decrees, who would be worse off under Article 58. Finally, there were even 58's of the sort who preferred to die kneeling loyally rather than on their feet. Nor were all those who poured out through the gate necessarily on their way to help the mutineers: some felons happily broke bounds to plunder the free settlements.)

Arming themselves with weapons taken from the guards (who were later buried at the Kochmas cemetery), the rebels went on to capture the neighboring Camp Division. With their combined forces they decided to advance on Vorkuta! It was only sixty kilometers away. But this was not to be. Parachute troops were dropped to bar their way. Then low-flying fighter planes raked them with machine-gun fire and dispersed them.

They were tried, more of them were shot, and others given twenty-five or ten years. (At the same time, many of those who had not joined in the operation but remained in the camp had their sentences "refreshed.")

The hopelessness of this rising as a military operation is obvious. But would you say that dying quietly by inches was more "hopeful"?

The Special Camps were set up soon after this, and most of the 58's were raked out. What was the result?

In 1949 in the Nizhni Aturyakh division of Berlag, a mutiny started in much the same way: they disarmed their guards, took six or eight Tommy guns, attacked the camp from outside, knocked the sentries off the towers, cut the telephone wires, and opened up the camp. This time there was no one in the camp who was not numbered, branded, doomed, beyond all hope.

And what do you think happened?

Most prisoners would not pass through the gates. . . .

Those who had started it all and now had nothing to lose turned the mutiny into a breakout, and a group of them headed for Mylgi. At Elgena Toskana their way was barred by troops and light tanks. (General Semyonov was in command of the operation.)

They were all killed.[1]

1. I do not claim that my account of these risings is entirely accurate. I shall be grateful to anyone who can correct me.

Riddle: What is the quickest thing in the world? Answer: Thought.

It is and it isn't. It can be slow, too—oh, how slow! Only slowly and laboriously do men, people, society, realize what has happened to them. Realize the truth about their position.

In herding the 58's into Special Camps, Stalin was exerting his strength mainly for his own amusement. He already had them as securely confined as they could be, but he thought he would be craftier than ever and improve on his best. He thought he knew how to make it still more frightening. The results were quite the opposite.

The whole system of oppression elaborated in his reign was based on keeping malcontents apart, preventing them from reading each other's eyes and discovering how many of them there were; instilling it into all of them, even into the most dissatisfied, that no one was dissatisfied except for a few doomed individuals, blindly vicious and spiritually bankrupt.

In the Special Camps, however, there were malcontents by the thousands. They knew their numerical strength. And they realized that they were not spiritual paupers, that they had a nobler conception of what life should be than their jailers, than their betrayers, than the theorists who tried to explain why they must rot in camps.

This novel aspect of the Special Camp went almost unnoticed at first. On the face of it, things went on as though it was a continuation of the Corrective Labor Camp. Except that the thieves, those pillars of camp discipline and of authority, soon lost heart. Still, crueler warders and an enlarged Disciplinary Barracks seemed to compensate for this loss.

But mark this: when the thieves lost heart, there was no more pilfering in the camp. You could now leave your rations in your locker. You could drop your shoes on the floor for the night instead of putting them under your pillow, and they would be there in the morning. You could leave your pouch on your locker for the night, instead of lying with it in your pocket and rubbing the tobacco to dust.

Trivialities, you say? No, all enormously important! Once there was no pilfering, people began to look at their neighbors kindly and without suspicion. Listen, lads, maybe we really are . . . *politicals?*

And if we're politicals we can speak a bit more freely, between

two bunks or by the fire on the work site. Better look around, of course, in case somebody's listening. Come to think of it, it doesn't matter a damn if they frame us—if you've got a *quarter* already, what else can they do to you?

The old camp mentality—you die first, I'll wait a bit; there is no justice, so forget it; that's the way it was, and that's the way it will be—also began to disappear.

Why forget it? Why must it always be so?

Teammates begin quietly talking to each other, not about rations, not about gruel, but about things which you never hear mentioned Outside—and talking more and more freely all the time. Until the foreman's fist suddenly ceases to throb with self-importance. Some foremen stop raising their fists altogether, others use them less often and less heavily. The foreman himself, instead of towering over his men, sits down to listen and to chat. And his team begin to look on him as a comrade—after all, he's *one of us.*

The foremen come to the Production Planning Section or the accounts office, and from discussing with them dozens of small questions—whose rations should be cut and whose shouldn't, whom to assign to which job—the trusties, too, are affected by this breath of fresh air, this small cloud of seriousness, responsibility, and purpose.

Not all of them at once. They had come to these camps greedily intent on grabbing the best jobs, and they had succeeded. They saw no reason why they shouldn't live as well as in the Corrective Labor Camps, shutting themselves up in their private rooms, roasting their potatoes with pork fat; live their own lives, separately from the workers. But no! It turned out that there was something more important than all this. And what might that be? . . . It became indecent to boast of being a bloodsucker, as people did in the Corrective Labor Camps, to boast that you lived at the expense of others. So trusties would make friends among the workers, spread their nice new jerkins beside the workers' grubby ones, and lie on the ground happily chatting their Sundays away.

People could no longer be divided into such crude categories as in the Corrective Labor Camps: trusties and workers, nonpoliticals and 58's. The breakdown was much more complex and interesting: people from the same region, religious groups, men of practical experience, men of learning.

It would take the authorities a long, long time to notice or

understand. But the work assigners no longer carried clubs, and didn't even bellow as loudly as before. They addressed the foremen in a *friendly* way: for example, "Must be about time to get your men out to work, Komov." (Not because they were overcome by remorse, but because there was something new and disquieting in the air.)

But all this happened *slowly.* These changes took months and months and months. They did not affect every foreman and every trusty, only those in whom some remnants of conscience and fraternal feeling still glowed under the ashes. Those who preferred to go on being bastards found no difficulty in doing just that. As yet there was no real shift of consciousness, no heroic shift, no spiritual upheaval. The camp remained a camp as before, we were as much oppressed and as helpless as ever, there was still no hope for us but to crawl away under the wire and run out into the steppe, to be showered with bullets and hunted down with dogs.

A bold thought, a desperate thought, a thought to raise a man up: how could things be changed so that instead of *us* running from *them, they* would run from *us?*

Once the question was put, once a certain number of people had thought of it and put it into words, and a certain number had listened to them, the age of escapes was over. The age of rebellion had begun.

But how to begin? Where to begin? We were shackled, we were wrapped about by tentacles, we were deprived of freedom of movement—where could we begin?

Far from simple in this life are the simplest things of all. Even in the Corrective Labor Camps some people seem to have got around to the idea that stool pigeons should be killed. Even there accidents were sometimes arranged: a log would roll off a pile and knock a stoolie into the swollen river. So that it shouldn't have been difficult to figure out in the Special Camps which tentacles to hack off first. You would expect everybody to see that, yet nobody did.

Suddenly—a suicide. In the Disciplinary Barracks, hut No. 2, a man was found hanging. (I am going through the stages of the process as they occurred in Ekibastuz. But note that the stages were just the same in other Special Camps!) The bosses were not greatly upset; they cut him down and wheeled him off to the scrap heap.

A rumor went around the work team. The man was an informer. He hadn't hanged himself. He had been hanged.

As a lesson to the rest.

There were a lot of filthy swine in the camp, but none so hoggish, so crude, so brazen as Timofey S——,[2] who was in charge of the mess hut. His bodyguards were the fat, pig-faced cooks, and he had also hand-reared a retinue of thuggish orderlies. He and his retainers beat the zeks with fists and sticks. On one occasion, quite unjustly, he struck a short, swarthy prisoner whom everybody called "the kid." It was not his habit to notice whom he was beating. But there were no mere "kids" as things now were in the Special Camps, and this kid was also a Moslem. There were quite a few Moslems in the camp. They were not just common criminals. You could see them praying at sunset at the western end of the camp area (in a Corrective Labor Camp, people would have laughed, but we did not), throwing up their arms and pressing their foreheads to the ground. They had elders, and true to the spirit of the times, they met in council. The motion was to avenge themselves!

Early one Sunday morning, the victim, together with an adult companion, an Ingush, slipped into the trusties' hut while they were still wallowing in bed, and each of them quickly stuck a knife into the fat hog.

But how green we still were. They did not try to hide their faces or to run away. At peace with themselves, now that duty was done, they went with their bloody knives straight from the corpse to the warders' room, and gave themselves up. They would be put on trial.

All these were tentative fumblings. All this could perhaps have happened in a Corrective Labor Camp. But civic thought made further strides: perhaps this was the crucial link at which the chain must be broken?

"Kill the stoolie!" That was it, the vital link! A knife in the heart of the stoolie! Make knives and cut stoolies' throats—that was it!

Now, as I write this chapter, rows of humane books frown down at me from the walls, the tarnished gilt on their well-worn spines glinting reproachfully like stars through cloud. Nothing in the world should be sought through violence! By taking up the sword, the knife, the rifle, we quickly put ourselves on the level of our

2. I am not concealing his surname; I just don't remember it.

tormentors and persecutors. And there will be no end to it. . . .

There will be no end. . . . Here, at my desk, in a warm place, I agree completely.

If you ever get twenty-five years for nothing, if you find yourself wearing four number patches on your clothes, holding your hands permanently behind your back, submitting to searches morning and evening, working until you are utterly exhausted, dragged into the cooler whenever someone denounces you, trodden deeper and deeper into the ground—from the hole you're in, the fine words of the great humanists will sound like the chatter of the well-fed and free.

There will be no end of it! . . . But will there be a beginning? Will there be a ray of hope in our lives or not?

The oppressed at least concluded that evil cannot be cast out by good.

Stoolies, you say, are human beings, too? . . . Warders went around the barracks and to intimidate us read out an order addressed to the whole Peschany camp complex. At one of the women's divisions, two girls (their dates of birth were given; they were very young) had indulged in anti-Soviet talk. "A tribunal consisting of . . ." ". . . death by shooting!"

Those girls, whispering together on their bunks, had ten years hanging around their necks already. What foul creature, with a burden of its own to carry, had turned them in? How can you say that stoolies are human beings?

There were no misgivings. But the first blows were still not easy.

I do not know about other places (they started killing in *all* the Special Camps, even the Spassk camp for the sick and disabled), but in our camp it began with the arrival of the Dubovka transport —mainly Western Ukrainians, OUN members. The movement everywhere owed a lot to these people, and indeed it was they who set the wheels in motion. The Dubovka transport brought us the bacillus of rebellion.

These sturdy young fellows, fresh from the guerrilla trails, looked around themselves in Dubovka, were horrified by the apathy and slavery they saw, and reached for their knives.

In Dubovka it had quickly ended in mutiny, arson, and disbandment. But the camp bosses were so blindly sure of themselves (for thirty years they had met no opposition, and had grown unused to it) that they did not take the trouble even to keep the rebels separated from us. They were scattered

throughout the camp in various work teams. This was a Corrective Labor Camp practice: there, dispersal muffled protest. But in our purer air, dispersal only helped the flames to engulf the whole mass more rapidly.

The newcomers went to work with their teams, but never lifted a finger, or just made a show of it; instead they lay in the sun (it was summer), conversing quietly. At such times, to the casual eye they looked very much like thieves *making law,* especially as they, too, were well-nourished, broad-shouldered young men.

A law indeed emerged, but it was a new and surprising law: "You whose conscience is unclean—this night you die!"

Murders now followed one another in quicker succession than escapes in the best period. They were carried out confidently and anonymously: no one went with a bloodstained knife to give himself up; they saved themselves and their knives for another deed. At their favorite time—when a single warder was unlocking huts one after another, and while nearly all the prisoners were still sleeping—the masked avengers entered a particular section, went up to a particular bunk, and unhesitatingly killed the traitor, who might be awake and howling in terror or might be still asleep. When they had made sure that he was dead, they walked swiftly away.

They wore masks, and their numbers could not be seen—they were either picked off or covered. But if the victim's neighbors should recognize them by their general appearance, so far from hurrying to volunteer information, they would not now give in even under interrogation, even under threat from the godfathers, but would repeat over and over again: "No, no, I don't know anything, I didn't see anything." And this was not simply in recognition of a hoary truth known to all the oppressed: "What you don't know can't hurt you"; it was self-preservation! Because anyone who *gave names* would have been killed next 5 A.M., and the security officer's good will would have been no help to him at all.

And so murder (although as yet there had been fewer than a dozen) became *the rule,* became a normal occurrence. "Anybody been killed today?" prisoners would ask each other when they went to wash or collect their morning rations. In this cruel sport the prisoner's ear heard the subterranean gong of justice.

It was done in a strictly conspiratorial fashion. Somewhere, someone (of recognized authority) simply gave a name to someone

else: he's the one! It was not his concern who would do the killing, or on what date, or where the knives would come from. And the hit men, who were concerned with all these things, did not know the judge whose sentence they must carry out.

Bearing in mind the impossibility of documentary confirmation that a man was an informer, we are bound to acknowledge that this improperly constituted, illegal, and invisible court was much more acute in its judgments, much less often mistaken, than any of the tribunals, panels of three, courts-martial, or Special Boards with which we are familiar.

The *chopping,* as we called it, went so smoothly that it began to encroach on the daytime and become almost public. A small, blotchy-faced "barracks elder," once a big NKVD man in Rostov, and a notorious louse, was killed one Sunday afternoon in the "bucket room." Prisoners had become so hardened that they crowded in to see the corpse lying in a pool of blood.

Next the avengers ran through the camp with knives in broad daylight, chasing the informer who had *betrayed* a tunnel under the camp area from the Disciplinary Barracks, hut No. 8 (the camp command had woken up and herded the Dubovka ringleaders into it, but by now the *chopping* went on just as well without them). The informer fled from them into the staff barracks, they followed, he rushed into the office of the divisional commander, fat Major Maksimenko, and they were still behind him. At that moment the camp barber was shaving the major in his armchair. The major was unarmed, in accordance with camp regulations—they are not supposed to carry firearms into the camp area. When he saw the murderers armed with knives, the terrified major jumped from under the razor and begged for mercy, thinking that they were about to knife him. He was relieved to see them cut up the stoolie before his very eyes. (Nobody was even after the major. The nascent movement had issued a directive: only stoolies to be killed, warders and officers not to be touched.) All the same, the major jumped out of the window half-shaven, with a white smock wrapped around him, and ran for the guardhouse, shouting, in panic: "You in the watchtower, shoot! Shoot, I say." But the watchtower did not open fire.

On one occasion a stoolie broke away before they could finish the job and rushed wounded into the hospital. There he was operated on and bandaged up. But if the major had been frightened out of his wits by knives, could the hospital save a

stoolie? Two or three days later they finished him off on a hospital bed. . . .

Out of five thousand men about a dozen were killed, but with every stroke of the knife more and more of the clinging, twining tentacles fell away. A remarkable fresh breeze was blowing! On the surface, we were prisoners living in a camp just as before, but in reality we had become free—free because for the very first time in our lives, we had started saying openly and aloud all that we thought! No one who has not experienced this transition can imagine what it is like!

And the informers . . . stopped informing.

Until then a security officer could make anyone he liked stay behind in camp in the daytime, talk to him for hours on end—whether to collect denunciations, give new instructions, or elicit the names of prisoners who looked out of the ordinary, who had done nothing so far but were capable of it, who were suspected of being possible nuclei of future resistance.

When his work team came back in the evening they would question their mate. "Why did they send for you?" And he would always reply, whether it was the truth or impudent bluff: "They wanted to show me some photographs."

True enough, many prisoners were shown photographs and asked to identify people whom they might have known during the war. But the security officers couldn't show them to everybody, and anyway it would have been pointless. Yet everybody—friends and traitors alike—always mentioned them. Suspicion moved in with us, and forced us into our shells.

But now the air was being cleansed of suspicion! Now even if a security officer ordered somebody to stay away from work line-up—he *would not!* Incredible! Unheard of in all the years of the Cheka-GPU-MVD's existence! They summoned a man, and instead of dragging himself there with his heart missing beats, instead of trotting in with a servile look on his silly face, he preserved his dignity (his teammates were watching) and refused to go! An invisible balance hung in the air over the work line-up. In one of its scales all the familiar phantoms were heaped: interrogation officers, punches, beatings, sleepless standing, "boxes" (cells too small to sit or lie down in), cold, damp punishment cells, rats, bedbugs, tribunals, second and third sentences. But this could not all happen at once, this was a slow-grinding bone mill, it could not devour all of us at once and process us in a

single day. And even when they had been through it—as every one of us had—men still went on existing.

While in the other scale lay nothing but a single knife—but that knife was meant for you, if you gave in! It was meant for you alone, in the breast, and not sometime or other, but at dawn tomorrow, and all the forces of the Cheka-MGB could not save you from it! It was not a long one, but just right for neat insertion between your ribs. It didn't even have a proper handle, just a piece of old insulation tape wound around the blunt end of the blade—but this gave a very good grip, so that the knife would not slip out of the hand!

And this bracing threat weighed heavier! It gave the weak strength to tear off the leeches, to pass by and follow their mates. (It also gave them a good excuse later on: We would have stayed behind, citizen officer, but we were afraid of the knife. . . . You aren't threatened by it; you can't imagine what it's like.)

This was not all. Not only did they stop answering the summonses of the security officers and other camp authorities; they were now chary of dropping an envelope or any bit of paper with writing on it into the mailbox, which hung in the camp area, or the boxes for complaints to higher authority. Before mailing a letter or putting in a complaint, they would ask someone to look at it. "Go on, read it, it isn't a denunciation. Come with me while I mail it."

So that now the bosses were suddenly blind and deaf. To all appearances, the tubby major, his equally tubby second in command, Captain Prokofiev, and all the warders walked freely about the camp, where nothing threatened them; moved among us, watched us—and yet saw nothing! Because a man in uniform sees and hears nothing without stoolies: prisoners stop talking, turn their backs, hide things, move away at his approach. . . . A few yards off, faithful informants are swooning with desire to sell their comrades—but not one of them even makes a secret sign.

The information machine on which alone the fame of the omnipotent and omniscient Organs had been based in decades past had broken down.

On the face of it, the same teams still went to work at the same sites. (We had, however, agreed among ourselves to resist the convoy guards, too, not to let them rearrange the ranks of five, or to re-count us on the march—and we succeeded! There were no stoolies among us—and the Tommy-gunners also weakened!) The

teams worked to fill their norms satisfactorily. On their return they allowed the warders to search them as before. (Their knives were never found, though.) But in reality other forms of human association now bound people more closely than the work teams artificially put together by the administration. Most important were national ties. National groups—Ukrainians, United Moslems, Estonians, Lithuanians—which informers could not penetrate, were born and flourished. No one elected the leadership, but its composition so justly satisfied the claims of seniority, wisdom, and suffering that no one disputed its authority over its own nation. A consultative and coordinating body evidently came into being as well—a "Council of Nationalities," as it were.[3]

The teams were the same as before, and there were no more of them, but here was something strange: a sudden *shortage of foremen* in the camp—an unheard-of phenomenon in Gulag. At first the wastage looked natural: one went into the hospital, another went to work in the service yard, a third was due for release. But the work assigners had always had crowds of candidates eager to buy a foreman's job with a piece of fatback or a sweater. Now instead of candidates there were some foremen who hung about the Production Planning Section daily, asking to be relieved of their jobs as soon as possible.

As things now were, the old methods used by foremen to drive a worker into a wooden overcoat were hopelessly out of date, and not everyone had the wit to devise new ones. There was soon such a shortage of foremen that work assigners would come into a squad's quarters for a smoke and a chat, and simply beg for their help. "Come on, lads, you've got to have a foreman; this is a ridiculous state of affairs. Come on now, choose somebody for yourselves and we'll promote him right away."

3. Here some qualification is necessary. It was not all as clean and smooth as it looks from this description of the main trend. There were rival groups—the "moderates" and the "ultras." Personal predilections and dislikes and the clash of ambitions among men eager to be "leaders" also crept in. The "hit men," the young bulls of the herd, were far from being men of broad political vision; some were apt to demand extra rations for their "work" and to try to get them by threatening the cook in the hospital kitchen. They demanded, in other words, to be fed at the expense of the sick, and if the cook refused, they would kill him without any formal court of morals: they had the knack of it, masks, knives in their hands. In a word, corruption and decay—old, invariable feature of revolutionary movements throughout history—were already burrowing into the healthy core.

There was one case of simple error: a crafty informer induced a good-natured working prisoner to change beds with him—and the man was murdered in the morning.

But in spite of these lapses, the movement as a whole kept strictly on course. We knew where we were going. The required social effect was achieved.

This happened more and more often when foremen started *escaping* into the Disciplinary Barracks—hiding behind stone walls! Not only they, but bloodsucking work assigners like Adaskin, stoolies on the brink of exposure or, something told them, next on the list, suddenly took fright and *ran for it!* Only yesterday they had put a brave face on it, behaving and speaking as though they approved of what was afoot (just try telling the zeks otherwise in their present mood!); only last night they had gone to bed in the common hut (whether to sleep or to lie there tense and ready to fight for their lives, vowing that there would be no more nights like this); but today they have vanished. An orderly receives instructions: carry so-and-so's things over to the Disciplinary Barracks.

This was a new period, a heady and spine-tingling period in the life of the Special Camp. It wasn't we who had taken to our heels —they had, ridding us of their presence! A time such as we had never experienced or thought possible on this earth: when a man with an unclean conscience could not go quietly to bed! Retribution was at hand—not in the next world, not before the court of history, but retribution live and palpable, raising a knife over you in the light of dawn. It was like a fairy tale: the ground is soft and warm under the feet of honest men, but under the feet of traitors it prickles and burns. If only our Great Outside were as lucky, the Land of the Free, which never has seen and perhaps never will see such a time.

The grim stone jailhouse, by now enlarged and completed, with its tiny muzzled windows, cold, damp, and dark, surrounded with a fence of overlapping two-inch boards—the Disciplinary Barracks so lovingly prepared by the masters of the camps for recalcitrants, runaways, awkward customers, protesters, people of courage—has suddenly become a rest home for retired stoolies, bloodsuckers, and bully boys.

It was, surely, a witty fellow who first had the idea of running to the Chekists and begging them to let their faithful servant take sanctuary from the people's wrath in the stone sack.

They themselves had begged to be locked up more securely, they had run not away from but into jail; they had voluntarily agreed never again to breathe clean air or see sunlight. I don't think history records anything like it.

The prison chiefs and security officers had pity on the first of them and took them under their wings; they had to look after their

own. The best cell in the barracks was assigned to them (the camp wits called it the safe deposit), mattresses were sent in, better heating was ordered, a one-hour exercise period was prescribed.

But behind the first smart alecks came a long line of others less smart but no less eager to live. (Some tried to save their faces even in flight: who knows, they might someday have to go back and live among zeks again. Archdeacon Rudchuk's flight to the Disciplinary Barracks was carefully staged: warders came into the hut after locking-up time, executed a ruthless search, even shaking out the contents of his mattress, "arrested" Rudchuk, and took him away. The camp, however, was soon reliably informed that the haughty archdeacon, amateur of the paintbrush and the guitar, was with the others in the "safe deposit.") Their numbers shortly topped a dozen, fifteen, twenty! ("Machekhovsky's squad," people started calling them, after the chief disciplinary officer.) A second cell had to be brought into use, which further reduced the Disciplinary Barracks' productive area.

But a stoolie is only wanted, only useful, so long as he can rub shoulders with the crowd and pass undetected. Once detected, he is worthless, and cannot go on serving in the same camp. He eats the bread of idleness in the Disciplinary Barracks, doesn't go out to work, isn't worth his salt. Even the MVD's philanthropy must have some limits!

So the flow of stoolies begging to be saved was stemmed. Latecomers had to remain in their sheep's clothing and await the knife.

An informer is like a ferryman: once he's served his purpose, nobody wants to know him.

The camp authorities were more concerned with countermeasures to stop the menacing movement and break its back. They clutched first at the method with which they were most familiar —issuing written orders.

The masters of our bodies and souls were particularly anxious not to admit that our movement was political in character. In their menacing orders (warders went around the huts reading them out) the new trend was declared to be nothing but *gangsterism.* This made it all simpler, more comprehensible, somehow cozier. It seemed only yesterday that they had sent us gangsters labeled "politicals." Well, politicals—real politicals for the first time—had now become "gangsters." It was announced, not very confidently, that these gangsters would soon be discovered (so far not one of them had been), and still less confidently, that they would

be shot. The orders further appealed to the prisoner mass to *condemn* the gangsters and *struggle* against them!

The prisoners listened and went away chuckling. Seeing the disciplinary officers afraid to call "political" behavior by its name (although the purpose of all investigations for thirty years past had been the imputation of political motives), we were aware of their weakness.

And weakness it was! Calling the movement "gangsterism" was a ruse to relieve the camp administration of responsibility for allowing a political movement to develop in the camp! This pretense was just as convenient, just as necessary higher up: in the provincial and camp administrations of the MVD, the central offices of Gulag, the ministry itself. A system which lives in constant dread of publicity loves to deceive itself. If the victims had been warders or disciplinary officers, it would have been difficult not to invoke Article 58-8 (on terrorism), and the camp authorities could have easily responded with death sentences. Under the present circumstances, however, our masters were presented with an irresistible opportunity to camouflage what was happening in the Special Camps as part of the "bitches' war," which was then shaking the Corrective Labor Camps to their foundations, and was of course engineered by the Gulag administration.[4]

4. The "bitches' war" deserves a chapter of its own in this book, but a great deal of additional material would have to be found. Let me refer the reader to Varlam Shalamov's study *Ocherki Prestupnogo Mira (Essays on the Criminal World),* although this, too, is incomplete.

Briefly, the "bitches' war" flared up somewhere around 1949 (if we discount sporadic minor clashes between thieves and "bitches"). In 1951–1952 it was at its fiercest. The criminal world was subdivided into many different sects: apart from thieves proper and "bitches," there were also the No-Limiters, the Makhrovtsy, the Uporovtsy, the Pirovarovtsy, the Red Riding Hoods, the Fuli Nam, the Crowbar-Belted—and that is not the end of them.

By this time the Gulag administrators had lost faith in infallible theories about the re-education of criminals and had evidently decided to lighten their load by playing on these differences, supporting first one group, then another, and using their knives to destroy others. The butchery went on openly and wholesale.

Then the professional criminals who took to murder developed their own technique: either they killed with someone else's hands, or when they themselves killed they made someone else take the blame. So young casual offenders or ex-soldiers or officers, under threat of murder, took other people's murders on themselves, were sentenced to twenty-five years under Article 59-3 (banditry), and are still inside. Whereas the thieves who led the groups came out clean under the "Voroshilov amnesty" in 1953. (But let us not be too downhearted: they have been back inside a time or two since then.)

When our newspapers revived the fashion for sentimental stories about the remolding of criminals, reports—muddled and mendacious, of course—about the butchery in the camps also broke through into the columns of the press, with the "bitches' war," the "chopping" in the Special Camps, and any unexplained bloodletting deliberately mixed up (to confuse history).

This was their way of whitewashing themselves. But they also deprived themselves of the right to shoot the camp murderers, which was the only effective countermeasure. And they could not oppose the growing movement.

The orders were of no avail. The prisoner masses did not start *condemning* and *struggling* on behalf of their masters. The next measure was to put the whole camp on a punitive routine. This meant that in nonworking hours on weekdays, and all day on Sundays, we were under lock and key, and had to use the latrine bucket, and were even fed in our huts. They started carrying the broth and mush around in big tubs, and the mess hall was deserted.

This was a hard regime, but it did not last long. We were lazy at work, and the Mining Trust set up a howl. More important, the warders' work load was quadrupled—they were incessantly rushing from one end of the camp to the other, letting orderlies in with buckets, letting them out again, bringing the food around, escorting groups of prisoners to and from the Medical Section.

The object of the camp administration was to make things so hard for us that we would betray the murderers out of exasperation. But we braced ourselves to suffer, to hang on a bit: it was worth it! Their other object was to keep the huts closed so that murderers could not come from outside, and so would be easier

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The camp theme interests the whole Soviet people, and such articles are read avidly, but they are no aid to understanding (which is why they are written). Thus the journalist Galich published in *Izvestiya* in July, 1959, a rather suspect "documentary" tale about a certain Kosykh, who is supposed to have touched the hearts of the Supreme Soviet with an eighty-page typewritten letter from a camp. (1. Where did he get his typewriter? Did it belong to the security officer? 2. Who would ever read eighty whole pages—those people yawn their heads off after one.) This Kosykh was in for twenty-five years—a second sentence for something he did in the camps. But what? On this point Galich—and it is our journalists' distinctive characteristic—immediately loses the capacity for clear and articulate speech. It is impossible to understand whether Kosykh had murdered a "bitch," or a stoolie (which would make it "political"). But that is characteristic—in historical retrospect everything is consigned to a single heap and called gangsterism. This is the best a national newspaper can do by way of scientific explanation: "Beria's stooges were then active in the camps." (Then, and not earlier? Then, but not now?) "Rigorous application of the law was undermined by the illegal actions of persons who were supposed to enforce it" (How? Did they go against generally binding instructions?). "*They did all they could to foment hostility* [My italics. This much is true—A.S.] between various groups of prisoners." (The use of informers can also be covered by this formula.) "There was savage, ruthless, artificially fomented enmity."

It of course proved impossible to put a stop to the killings in the camps by means of twenty-five-year sentences—many of the murderers had twenty-five years already—so a decree of 1961 made murder (including, of course, the murder of informers) in the camps punishable by shooting. This Khrushchevian decree was all the Stalinist Special Camps had lacked.

to find. But another murder took place, and still no one was caught—just as before no one had ever seen anything or knew anything. Then somebody's head was smashed in at work—locked huts are no safeguard against that.

They revoked the punitive regime. Instead they had the bright idea of building the "Great Wall of China." This was a wall two bricks thick and four meters high, to cut across the width of the camp. They were preparing to divide the camp into two parts, but left an opening for the time being. (All Special Camps were to do the same. Barriers to break up large camp areas were going up in many other places.) Since the Mining Trust could not pay for this work and since it had no relevance to the settlement, the whole burden—making the adobe bricks, shifting them around to dry, carrying them to the wall, laying them—fell upon us again, upon our Sundays and our light summer evenings after we returned from work. We greatly resented that wall—we knew that the bosses had some dirty trick in store—but we had no choice but to build it. Only a little of us was as yet free—our heads and our mouths—but we were still stuck up to our shoulders in the quagmire of slavery.

All these measures—the threatening orders, the punitive regime, the wall—were crude, and in the best tradition of prison thinking. But what was this? Without warning or explanation, they called teams one after another to the photography room, and photographed them, but politely, without putting number plates on dog collars around their necks, without making them turn their heads to a particular angle—it was just sit comfortably, look just as you please. From a "careless" remark dropped by the head of the Culture and Education Section, the workers learned that they were being "photographed for documents."

For what documents? What documents can prisoners have? . . . A ripple of excitement went around among the credulous: Perhaps they were preparing passes so that prisoners could move without convoy guards? Or perhaps . . . ? Or perhaps . . . ?

Then one warder returned from leave and loudly told another (in the presence of prisoners) that on his way he had seen trainloads of released prisoners going home, with slogans and green branches.

Lord, how our hearts beat! It was high time, of course! They should have started like this after the war! Had it really begun at last?

We heard that someone had received a letter from his family saying that his neighbors had already been released and were at home!

Suddenly one of the photographed brigades was summoned before a board. Go in one by one. At a table with a red cloth on it, under a portrait of Stalin, sat our senior camp personnel, but not alone: there were also two strangers, one a Kazakh, the other a Russian, who had never been in our camp. They were business-like but jolly as they filled in their form: surname, first names, year of birth, place of birth—and then, instead of the usual "article under which sentenced, length of sentence, end of sentence," they asked in detail about the man's family status, his wife, his parents, if he had children, how old they were, where they all lived, together or separately. And all this was taken down! (One or another of the board would tell the clerk to "get that down, too.")

Strange, painfully pleasurable questions! They make the hardest among us feel a glow and want to weep! For years and years he has heard only that abrupt yapping: "Article? Sentence? Court?" —and suddenly he sees sitting there kindly, serious, humane officers, questioning him unhurriedly and sympathetically, yes, sympathetically, about things he has buried so deep that he is afraid to touch them himself, things about which he might occasionally say a word or two to his neighbor on the bed platform, or then again might not. . . . And these officers (if you remember it at all, you forgive the first lieutenant there who took a photograph of your family away from you and tore it up last October anniversary)—these officers, when they hear that your wife has remarried, that your father is failing fast and has lost hope of seeing his son again—tut sadly, exchange glances, shake their heads.

No, they're not so bad, after all; they're human, too; it's just the lousy service they're in. And when they've written it all down, the last question they ask each prisoner is this:

"Right; now where would you like to *live?* . . . Where your parents are, or where you lived before?"

The zek's eyes pop out. "How do you mean? I'm in No. 7 Barracks. . . ."

"Look, we know that." The officers laugh. "We're asking where you'd *like* to live. Suppose you were let out—where should your documents be made out for?"

The whole world spins before the prisoner's eyes, the sunlight splinters into an iridescent haze. With his mind, he understands

that this is a dream, a fairy tale, that it cannot be true, that his sentence is twenty-five years or ten, that nothing has changed, that he is plastered all over with clay and will be back on the job tomorrow—but there sit several officers, two majors among them, calmly, compassionately insisting:

"Where is it to be, then? Name it."

With his heart hammering, and warm waves of gratitude washing over him, like a blushing boy mentioning the name of his girl, he gives away his cherished secret—where he would like to live out peacefully the remainder of his days if he were not a doomed convict with four number patches.

And they . . . write it down! And ask for the next man to be called in. While the first dashes half-crazed into the corridor and tells the other lads what has happened.

The members of the team go in one by one and answer questions for the friendly officers. And there is only one in half a hundred who says with a grin:

"Everything's just fine here in Siberia, only the climate's too hot. Couldn't I go to the Arctic Circle?"

Or: "Write this down: 'In a camp I was born, in a camp I'll die. I know no better place.' "

They had such talks with two or three teams (there were two hundred of them in the camp). The camp was in a state of excitement for some days, here was something to argue about—though half of us didn't really believe it. Those times had passed! But the board never convened again. The photography had cost them little—the cameras clicked on empty cartridges. But sitting in a huddle for heart-to-heart talks with those scoundrels overtaxed their patience. And so nothing came of their shameless trick.

(Let's admit it—this was a great victory! In 1949 camps with a ferocious regime were set up—and intended, of course, to last forever. Yet by 1951 their masters were reduced to this maudlin playacting. What further admission of our success could we ask for? Why did they never have to put on such an act in the Corrective Labor Camps?)

Again and again the knives flashed.

So our masters decided to *make a snatch.* Without stoolies they didn't know exactly whom they wanted, but still they had ideas and suspicions of their own (and perhaps denunciations were somehow arranged on the sly).

Two warders came into a hut after work, and casually told a man, "Get ready and come with us."

The prisoner looked around at the other lads and said, "I'm not going."

In fact, this simple everyday situation—*a snatch, an arrest*—which we had never resisted, which we were used to accepting fatalistically, held another possibility: that of saying, "I'm not going!" Our liberated heads understood that now.

The warders pounced on him. "What do you mean, not going?"

"I'm just not going," the zek answered, firmly. "I'm all right where I am."

There were shouts from all around:

"Where's he supposed to go? . . . What's he got to go for? . . . We won't let you take him! . . . We won't let you! . . . Go away!"

And the wolves understood that we were not the sheep we used to be. That if they wanted to grab one of us now they would have to use trickery, or do it at the guardhouse, or send a whole detail to take one prisoner. With a crowd around, they would never take him.

Purged of human filth, delivered from spies and eavesdroppers, we looked about and saw, wide-eyed, that . . . we were thousands! that we were . . . *politicals!* that we could *resist!*

We had chosen well; the chain would snap if we tugged at this link—the stoolies, the talebearers and traitors! Our own kind had made our lives impossible. As on some ancient sacrificial altar, their blood had been shed that we might be freed from the curse that hung over us.

The revolution was gathering strength. The wind that seemed to have subsided had sprung up again in a hurricane to fill our eager lungs.

Chapter 11

■

Tearing at the Chains

The middle ground had now collapsed, the ditch which ran between us and our custodians was now a deep moat, and we stood on opposite slopes, taking the measure of the situation.

"Stood" is of course a manner of speaking. *We* went to work daily with our new foremen (some of them secretly elected and coaxed into serving the common cause, others not new to the job but now so sympathetic, so friendly, so solicitous as to be unrecognizable), we were never late for work line-up, we never let each other down, there were no shirkers, we chalked up a good day's work—you might think that our masters could be pleased with us. And that we could be pleased with them: they had quite forgotten how to yell and to threaten, they no longer hauled us into the Disciplinary Barracks for petty reasons, they appeared not to notice that we had stopped doffing our caps to them. Major Maksimenko did not get up for work line-up in the morning, but he did like to greet the columns at the guardhouse of an evening, and to crack a joke or two while they were marking time there. He beamed upon us with fat complacency, like a Ukrainian rancher somewhere in the Tavrida surveying his countless flocks as they come home from the steppe. They even started showing us films occasionally on Sundays. There was just one thing. They went on plaguing us with the "Great Wall of China."

All the same, we and they were thinking hard about the next stage. Things could not remain as they were: we could not be satisfied with what had happened, nor could they. Someone had to strike a blow.

But what should be our aim? We could now say out loud,

without looking nervously around, whatever we liked—all those things which had seethed inside us (and freedom of speech, even if it was only there in the camp, even though it had come so late, was a delight!). But could we hope to spread that freedom beyond the camp, or carry it out with us? Of course not. What further *political* demands could we put forward? We just couldn't think of any! Even if it had not been pointless and hopeless, we couldn't think of any! We, from where we were, could not demand that the country should change completely, nor that it should give up the camps: they would have rained bombs on us.

It would have been natural for us to demand that our *cases* be reviewed, and that unjust sentences, imposed without reason, be quashed. But even that looked hopeless. In the foul fog of terror that hung thickly over the land, the cases brought against most of us, and the sentences passed, seemed to our judges fully justified —and they had almost made us believe it ourselves. Besides, judicial review was a phantom process, which the crowd could get no grip on, and there could be no easier way to cheat us: they could make promises, spin out the proceedings, keep coming back to ask more questions—it could drag on for years. Suppose somebody was suddenly declared free and removed: how could we be sure that he was not on his way to be shot, or to another prison, or to be sentenced afresh?

Hadn't the farce of the "Board" already shown us how easy it is to create illusions? The Board was for packing us off home, even without judicial review. . . .

Where we were all of one mind, and had no doubts at all, was that the most humiliating practices must be abolished: the huts must be left unlocked overnight, and the latrine buckets removed; our number patches must be taken off; our labor must not be completely unpaid; we must be allowed to write twelve letters a year. (But all this and more—indeed, the right to twenty-four letters a year—had been ours in the Corrective Labor Camps—and had it made life there livable?)

As to whether we should fight for an eight-hour working day —there was no unanimity among us. . . . We were so unused to freedom that we seemed to have lost all appetite for it.

Ways and means were also discussed. How should we present our demands? What action should we take? Clearly, we could do nothing with bare hands against modern arms, and therefore the course for us to take was not armed rebellion, but a strike. On

strike we could, for instance, tear off the number patches ourselves.

But the blood in our veins was still slavish, still servile. . . . For all of us at once to remove the odious numbers from our persons seemed a step as daring, as audacious, as irrevocable as, say, taking to the streets with machine guns. And the word "strike" sounded so terrifying to our ears that we sought firmer ground: by refusing food when we refused to work it seemed to us that our moral right to strike would be reinforced. We felt that we had some sort of right to go on a hunger strike—but to strike in the ordinary sense? Generation after generation in our country had grown up believing that the horrifyingly dangerous and, of course, counter-revolutionary word "strike" belonged with "Entente," "Denikin," "kulak sabotage,"* "Hitler."

So that by voluntarily undertaking an unnecessary hunger strike, we voluntarily agreed to undermine the physical strength which we needed for the struggle. (Fortunately, no other camp seems to have repeated Ekibastuz's mistake.)

We went over and over the details of the proposed work stoppage–hunger strike. The general Disciplinary Code for Camps, recently made applicable to us, told us that they would reply by locking us in our huts. How, then, should we keep in touch with each other, and pass decisions about the further conduct of the strike from hut to hut? Someone had to devise signals, and get the huts to agree from which windows they would be made, and at which windows they would be picked up.

It was talked over in various places, in one group and another; it seemed inevitable and desirable, yet, because it was so novel, somehow impossible. We could not imagine ourselves suddenly assembling, finishing our discussions, resolving, and . . .

But our custodians did not have to organize secretly, they had a clear chain of command, they were more accustomed to action, they were less likely to lose by acting than by failing to act—and they got their blow in first.

After that, events took on a momentum of their own.

At peace and at ease on our familiar bunks, in our familiar sections, we greeted the new year, 1952. Then on Sunday, January 6, the Orthodox Christmas Eve, when the Ukrainians were getting ready to observe the holiday in style—they would make kutya,* fast till the first star appeared, and then sing carols—the doors were locked after morning inspection and not opened again.

No one had expected this! The preparations had been secret and sly! Through the windows we saw them herding a hundred or more prisoners from the next hut through the snow to the guardhouse, with all their belongings.

Were they being moved to another camp?

Then it was our turn. Warders came. And officers with cards. They called out names from the cards. Outside with all your things—including mattresses, just as they are; don't empty them!

So that was it! A regrouping! Guards were posted by the break in the Chinese Wall. It would be bricked up next day. We were taken past the guardhouse and herded, hundreds of us, with sacks and mattresses, like refugees from a burning village, around the boundary fence, past another guardhouse, into the other camp area. Passing those who were being driven in the opposite direction.

All minds were busily trying to work out who had been moved, who had been left behind, what this reshuffle meant. What our masters had in mind became clear soon enough. In one half of the camp (Camp Division No. 2) only the Ukrainian nationalists, some 2,000 of them, were left. In the half to which we had been driven, and which was to be Camp Division No. 1, there were some 3,500 men belonging to all the other ethnic groups—Russians, Estonians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Tatars, Caucasians, Georgians, Armenians, Jews, Poles, Moldavians, Germans, and a variegated sprinkling of other nationalities picked up from the expanses of Europe and Asia. In a word—our country, "one and indivisible." (Curious, this. The thinking of the MVD, which should have been enlightened by a supranational doctrine, called socialism, still followed the same old track: that of dividing nation from nation.)

The old teams were broken up, new ones were mustered; they would go to new work sites, live in new huts—in short, a complete reshuffle! There was enough to think about here for a week, not just one Sunday. Many links were snapped, people were thrown together in different combinations, and the strike, which had seemed imminent, was broken in advance. . . . Oh, they were clever!

The whole hospital, the mess hall, and the club remained in the Ukrainian Camp Division. We were left instead with the camp jail, while the Ukrainians, the Banderists, the most dangerous rebels, had been moved farther away from it. What did this mean?

We soon learned what. Reliable rumors went around the camp (from the working prisoners who took the gruel to the BUR) that the stoolies in the "safe deposit" had grown cheeky. Suspects, picked up here and there, two or three at a time, had been put in with the stoolies, who were torturing them in their common cell, choking them, beating them, trying to make them "sing" and to name names. *"Who's doing the slashing?"* This made the whole scheme as clear as daylight. They were using torture! Not the dog pack themselves—they probably had no authorization for it, and might run into trouble, so they had entrusted the stoolies with the job: find your murderers yourselves! The stoolies were all eagerness—no shot in the arm needed! And this was one way for those parasites to earn their keep. That was why the Banderists had been moved away from the BUR—so that they could not attack it. We were less of a worry: docile people, of different races, we would not make common cause. The rebels were . . . in the other place. And the wall was four meters high.

So many deep historians have written so many clever books—and still they have not learned how to predict those mysterious conflagrations of the human spirit, to detect the mysterious springs of a social explosion, nor even to explain them in retrospect.

Sometimes you can stuff bundle after bundle of burning tow under the logs, and they will not take. Yet up above, a solitary little spark flies out of the chimney and the whole village is reduced to ashes.

Our three thousand had no plans made, were quite unprepared, but one evening on their return from work the prisoners in a hut next to the BUR began dismantling their bunks, seized the long bars and crosspieces, ran through the gloom (there was a darkish place to one side of the BUR) to batter down the stout fence around the camp jail. They had neither axes nor crowbars—because there never are any inside the camp area—unless perhaps they had begged a couple from the maintenance yard.

There was a hammering noise—they worked like a team of good carpenters, levering the planks away as soon as they gave—and the grating protests of 12-centimeter nails could be heard all over the camp. It was hardly the time for carpenters to be working, but at least it was a workmanlike noise, and at first neither the men on the towers nor the warders, nor the other prisoners, thought anything of it. Life was following its usual evening routine: some

teams were going to supper, others straggling back from supper, some making for the Medical Section, others for the stores, others for the parcels office.

All the same, the warders were worried, hustled over to the BUR, to the half-dark wall where all the activity was—and raced like scalded cats to the staff barracks. Somebody rushed after a warder with a stick. Then, to provide full musical accompaniment, somebody started breaking windows in the staff barracks with stones or a stick. The staff's windowpanes shattered with a merry menacing crash.

What the lads had in mind was not to raise a rebellion, nor even to capture the BUR (no easy matter: Plate No. 5, taken many years later, shows the door of the Ekibastuz BUR off its hinges), but merely to pour petrol into the stoolies' cell, and toss in something burning—meaning: Watch your step, we'll show you yet! A dozen men did force their way through the gap knocked in the BUR fence. They started tearing around looking for the cell—they had made a guess at the window, but were not sure—then they had to dislodge the muzzle, give someone a leg up, pass the petrol pail —but machine-gun fire from the towers suddenly rattled across the camp, and they never did start their blaze.

The warders and Chief Disciplinary Officer Machekhovsky had fled from the camp and informed Division. (Machekhovsky, too, had been pursued by a prisoner with a knife, had run by way of the shed in the maintenance yard to a corner tower, shouting: "You in the tower, don't fire! I'm a friend," and scrambled through the outer fence.)[1] Division (where can we now inquire the names of the commanders?) gave telephonic instructions for the corner towers to open fire from machine guns—on three thousand unarmed people who knew nothing of what had happened. (Our team, for instance, was in the mess hall, and we were completely mystified when we heard all the shooting outside.)

It was one of fate's little jokes that this took place on January 22 (New Style), January 9 (Old Style), the anniversary of Bloody Sunday, which until that year was marked in the calendar as a day of solemn mourning. For us it proved to be Bloody Tuesday, and the butchers had much more elbow room than in Petersburg: this was not a city square, but the steppe,

1. He was hacked to pieces just the same—not, however, by us but by the thieves who replaced us in Ekibastuz in 1954. He was harsh, but courageous; there's no denying that.

with no witnesses, no journalists or foreigners around.[2]

Firing at random in the darkness, the machine-gunners blasted away at the camp area. True, the shooting did not last long, and most of the bullets probably passed overhead, but quite a few of them were lower—and how many does a man need? They pierced the flimsy walls of the huts, and, as always happens, wounded not those who had stormed the BUR, but others, who had no part in it. Nonetheless, they now had to *conceal their wounds,* stay away from the Medical Section, wait like dogs for time to heal them, otherwise they might be identified as participants in the mutiny—somebody, after all, must be plucked out of the faceless mass! In hut No. 9 a harmless old man, nearing the end of a ten-year sentence, was killed in his bed. He was due to be released in a month's time. His grown-up sons were serving in the same army as those who blazed away at us from the towers.

The besiegers left the prison yard and quickly dispersed to their barracks (where they had to put their bunks together again so as to cover their traces). Many others took the shooting as a warning to stay inside their huts. Yet others, on the contrary, poured out excitedly and scurried about the camp, trying to understand what it was all about.

By then there were no warders left in the camp area. The staff barracks was empty of officers, and terrible jagged holes yawned in its windows. The towers were silent. The curious, and the seekers after truth, roamed the camp.

Suddenly the gates of our Camp Division were flung wide and a platoon of convoy troops marched in with Tommy guns at the ready, firing short bursts at random. They fanned out in all directions, and behind them came the enraged warders, with lengths of iron pipe, clubs, or anything else they had been able to lay their hands on.

They advanced in waves on every hut, combing the whole camp area. Then the Tommy-gunners were silent, and halted while the warders ran forward to flush out prisoners in hiding, whether wounded or unhurt, and beat them unmercifully.

All this became clear later, but at the time we could only hear

2. But it is interesting to note that it was about this time that Soviet calendars stopped marking Bloody Sunday—as though it was after all a fairly ordinary occurrence, and not worth commemorating.

heavy firing in the camp area, and could see and understand nothing in the half-dark.

A lethal crush developed at the entrance to our hut: the prisoners were so anxious to shove their way in that no one could enter. (Not that the thin boards of the hut walls gave any protection against bullets, but once inside, a man ceased to be a mutineer.) I was one of those by the steps. I remember very well my state of mind: a nauseated indifference to my fate; a momentary indifference whether I survived or not. Why have you fastened your hooks on us, curse you! Why must we go on paying you till the day we die for the crime of being born into this unhappy world? Why must we sit forever in your jails? The prison sickness which is at once nausea and peace of mind flooded my being. Even my constant fear for the as-yet-unrecorded poem and the play I carried within me was in abeyance. In full view of the death which was wheeling toward us in military greatcoats, I made no effort at all to push through the door. This was the true convict mentality; this was what they had brought us to.

The doorway gradually cleared and I was among the last to go through. Shots rang out at this point, amplified by the hollow building. The three bullets they fired after us lodged in a row in the doorjamb. A fourth ricocheted upward and left a little round hole haloed with hairline cracks in the glass above the door.

Our pursuers did not break into the huts. They locked us in. They hunted down and beat those who had not been quick enough to run inside. A couple of dozen prisoners were wounded or badly beaten: some lay low and hid their wounds, others were passed to the Medical Section for a start, with jail and interrogation as participants in a mutiny to follow.

But all this became known only later. The doors were locked overnight, and on the following morning the inmates of different huts were not allowed to meet in the mess hall and piece the story together. In some huts, where no one was seen to be hurt and nothing was known about the killings, the deluded prisoners turned out to work. Our hut was one of them.

Out we went, but no one was led through the camp gates after us: the midway was empty, there was no work line-up! We had been tricked!

We felt wretched in the engineering shops that day. The lads went from bench to bench, and sat down to discuss what had

happened the day before, and how long we would go on working like donkeys and tamely putting up with it all. Camp veterans, who would never straighten their backs again, were skeptical. What else could we do? they asked. Did we suppose that anyone had ever survived unbroken? (This was the philosophy of the 1937 "draft.")

When we returned from work in the dark, the camp area was again deserted. Our scouts ran to the windows of other huts. They found that No. 9, in which there were two dead men and three wounded, and the huts next to it had not gone to work. The bosses had told them about us, hoping that they, too, would turn out tomorrow. But the way things were, we should obviously not be going in the morning ourselves.

Notes were tossed over the wall telling the Ukrainians what we had decided and asking for their support.

The work stoppage–hunger strike had not been carefully prepared, it was not even a coherent concept, and it began impulsively, with no directing center, no signal system.

Those prisoners in other camps who took over the food stores and then stayed away from work of course behaved more sensibly. But our action, if not very clever, was impressive: three thousand men simultaneously swore off both food and work.

Next morning not a single team sent its man to the bread-cutting room. Not a single team went to the mess hall, where broth and mush awaited them. The warders just could not understand it: twice, three times, four times they came into the huts to summon us with brisk commands, then to drive us out with threats, then to ask us nicely—no farther than to the mess hall, to collect our bread, with never a word for the present about work line-up.

But nobody went. They all lay on their bunks, fully dressed, wearing their shoes, and silent. Only we, the foremen (I had become a foreman in that hot year), felt called upon to answer, since the warders kept addressing themselves to us. We lay on our bunks like the rest and muttered from our pillows: "It's no good, boss. . . ."

This unanimous quiet defiance of a power which never forgave, this obstinate, painfully protracted insubordination, was somehow more frightening than running and yelling as the bullets fly.

In the end they stopped coaxing us and locked up the huts.

In the days that followed, no one left the huts except the orderlies—to carry the latrine buckets out and bring drinking water and

coal in. Only bed cases in the Medical Section were by general agreement allowed not to fast. Only doctors and medical orderlies were allowed to work. The kitchens cooked one meal and poured it away, cooked another, poured that away, and cooked no more. The trusties who worked there seem to have appeared before the camp authorities on the first day, explained that they simply couldn't carry on, and left the kitchens.

The bosses could no longer see us, no longer peer into our souls. A gulf had opened between the overseers and the slaves!

None of those who took part will ever forget those three days in our lives. We could not see our comrades in other huts, nor the corpses lying there unburied. Nonetheless, the bonds which united us, at opposite ends of the deserted camp, were of steel.

This was a hunger strike called not by well-fed people with reserves of subcutaneous fat, but by gaunt, emaciated men, who had felt the whip of hunger daily for years on end, who had achieved with difficulty some sort of physical equilibrium, and who suffered acute distress if they were deprived of a single 100-gram ration. Even the goners starved with the rest, although a three-day fast might tip them into irreversible and fatal decline. The food which we had refused, and which we had always thought so beggarly, was a mirage of plenty in the feverish dreams of famished men.

This was a hunger strike called by men schooled for decades in the law of the jungle: "You die first and I'll die later." Now they were reborn, they struggled out of their stinking swamp, they consented to die today, all of them together, rather than to go on living in the same way tomorrow.

In the huts roommates began to treat each other with a sort of ceremonious affection. Whatever scraps of food anyone—this meant mainly those who received parcels—had left were pooled, placed on a piece of rag spread out like a tablecloth, and then, by joint decision of the whole room, some eatables were shared out and others put aside for the next day. (Recipients of parcels might also have quite a bit of food in the personal provisions store, but for one thing no one could cross the camp to fetch it, and for another, not everyone would have been happy to bring his left-overs back with him: he might be counting on them to build him up when the strike was over. For this reason the strike, like everything that happened in prison, was an unequal ordeal, and the truly brave were those who had nothing in reserve, no hope

of recruiting their strength after the strike.) If there was any meal, they boiled it at the mouth of the stove and distributed the gruel by the spoonful. To make the fire hotter they broke planks off the bunks. The couch provided by the state is gone, but who cares when his life may not last the night!

What the bosses would do no one could predict. We thought that perhaps they would start firing on the huts again from the towers. The last thing we expected was any concession. We had never in our lives wrested anything from them, and our strike had the bitter tang of hopelessness.

But there was a sort of satisfaction in this feeling of hopelessness. We had taken a futile, a desperate step, it could only end badly—and that was good. Our bellies were empty, our hearts were in our boots—but some higher need was being satisfied. During those long hungry days, evenings, nights, three thousand men brooded over their three thousand sentences, their families, their lack of families, all that had befallen and would yet befall them, and although the hearts in thousands of breasts could not beat together—and there were those who felt only regret, only despair—yet most of them kept time: Things are as they should be! We'll keep it up to spite you! Things are bad! So much the better!

This, too, is a phenomenon which has never been adequately studied: we do not know the law that governs sudden surges of mass emotion, in defiance of all reason. I felt this soaring emotion myself. I had only one more year of my sentence to serve. I might have been expected to feel nothing but dismay and vexation that I was dirtying my hands on a broil from which I should hardly escape without a new sentence. And yet I had no regrets. Damn and blast the lot of you, I'll serve my time all over again if you like!

Next day we saw from our windows a group of officers making their way from hut to hut. A detail of warders opened the door, went along the corridors, looked into the rooms, and called us (not in the old way, as though we were cattle, but gently): "Foremen! You're wanted at the entrance!"

A debate began among us. It was the teams, not their foremen, who had to decide. Men went from room to room to talk it over. Our position was ambiguous. Stoolies had been weeded out from our ranks, but we suspected that there were others, and there were certainly some—like the slippery, bold-faced foreman-mechanic,

Mikhail Generalov. And anyway, knowledge of human nature told us that many of those on strike and starving for freedom's sake today would *spill the beans* tomorrow for the sake of a quiet life in chains. For this reason, those who were steering the strike (and there were leaders, of course) did not show themselves, but remained underground. They did not openly assume power, and the foremen had openly resigned their authority. So that the strikers seemed to be drifting, without a helmsman.

A decision was reached at last in some invisible quarter. We foremen, six or seven of us, went out to the entrance, where the officers were patiently awaiting us. (It was the entranceway of that very same hut, No. 2, until recently a Disciplinary Barracks, from which the "metro" tunnel had run, and the escape hatch itself was a few meters away from the place where we now met.) We leaned back against the walls, lowered our eyes, and stood like men of stone. We lowered our eyes because not one of us could now look at our bosses sycophantically, and rebellious looks would have been foolish. We stood like hardened hooligans called before a teachers' meeting—hunched, hands in pockets, heads lowered and averted—incorrigible, impenetrable, hopeless.

From both corridors, however, a crowd of zeks pressed into the entranceway, and hiding behind those in front, the back rows could speak freely, call out our demands and our answers.

Officially, the officers with blue-edged epaulets (some we knew, others we had never seen before) saw and addressed only the foremen. Their manner was restrained. They did not try to intimidate us, but their tone was still intended to remind us that we were inferior. It would, so they said, be in our own interest to end the strike and the hunger strike. If we did, we would receive not only today's rations but—something unheard of in Gulag!—yesterday's, too. (They were so used to the idea that hungry men can always be bought!) Nothing was said either about punishment or about our demands—they might not have existed.

The warders stood at the sides, keeping their right hands in their pockets.

There were shouts from the corridor:

"Whoever's to blame for the shooting must be brought to justice!"

"Take the locks off the doors!"

"Off with the numbers!"

In other huts they also demanded a review of Special Board cases in the open courts.

While we foremen stood like schoolboy hooligans waiting for the headmaster to finish nagging.

The bosses left, and the hut was locked up again.

Although hunger had begun to get many of us down—our heads were heavy and our thoughts lacked clarity—in our hut not a single voice was raised in favor of surrender. Any regrets remained unspoken.

We tried to guess how high the news of our rebellion would go. They knew already, of course, in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, or would learn today—but did *Whiskers?* That butcher wouldn't stop at shooting the lot of us, all five thousand.

Toward evening we heard the drone of a plane somewhere near, although it was cloudy and not good flying weather. We surmised that someone even higher up had flown in.

A seasoned son of Gulag, Nikolai Khlebunov, who was friendly with some of us, had landed a job somewhere in the kitchens after nineteen years in prison, and as he passed through the camp that day he was quick enough and brave enough to slip us a half-pood sack of millet flour through the window. It was shared out between the seven teams, and cooked at night so that the warders couldn't catch us at it.

Khlebunov passed on some very bad news: Camp Division No. 2, where the Ukrainians were, beyond the Chinese Wall, had not supported us. That day and the day before, the Ukrainians had turned out to work as though things were quite normal. There could be no doubt that they had received our notes; they could hear how quiet we had been for two days; they could see from the tower crane on the building site that our camp area had been deserted since the shooting; they must have missed meeting our columns outside the camp. Nevertheless, they had not supported us! . . . (We learned afterward that the young men who were their leaders, and who still had no experience of practical politics, had argued that the Ukrainians had their own destiny, distinct from that of the Muscovites. They who had begun with such spirit had now fallen back and abandoned us.) So that there were not five thousand of us, but only three.

For the second night, the third morning, and the third day hunger clawed at our guts.

But when on the third morning the Chekists, in still greater

force, again summoned the foremen to the entrance, and once again we stood there—sullen, unreachable, hangdog—our general resolve was not to give way! We were carried along by inertial force.

The bosses only gave us new strength. The newly arrived brass hat had this to say:

"The administration of the Peschany camp *requests the prisoners to take their food.* The administration will receive any complaints. It will examine them and eliminate the causes of *conflict* between the administration and the prisoners."

Had our ears deceived us? They were *requesting us to take food!* And not so much as a word about work. We had stormed the camp jail, broken windows and lamps, chased warders with knives, and it now turned out that far from being a mutiny, this was a *conflict between* (!) . . . between equals . . . between the administration and the prisoners!

It had taken only two days and two nights of united action—and look how our serfmasters had changed their tone! Never in our lives, not only as prisoners, but as free men, as members of trade unions, had we heard our bosses speak with such unction!

Nonetheless, we started silently dispersing—no one could take a decision *there.* Nor could anyone there promise a decision. The foremen went away without once raising their eyes or looking around, even when the head of the Separate Camp Site addressed us one after another by name.

That was our answer.

The hut was locked again.

From outside it looked to the bosses as dumb and unyielding as ever. But inside, the sections were the scene of stormy debate. The temptation was too great! Soft speech had affected the undemanding zeks more than any threat would. Voices were heard urging surrender. What more, indeed, could we hope to achieve! . . .

We were tired! We were hungry! The mysterious force which had fused our emotions and borne us aloft was losing height and with tremulous wings bringing us down to earth again.

Yet mouths clamped tight for decades, mouths which had been silent for a lifetime, and should have stayed silent for what was left of it, were now opened. Among those listening to them, of course, were the surviving stoolies. These exhortations, in voices suddenly recovered for a few minutes, voices with a new ring to

them (in our room that of Dmitri Panin), would have to be paid for by a fresh term of imprisonment, a noose around the throat in which the pulse of freedom had fluttered. It was a price worth paying, for the vocal cords were for the first time put to the use for which they were created.

Give way now? That would mean accepting someone's word of honor. Whose word exactly? That of our jailers, the camp dog pack. In all the time that prisons had existed, in all the time the camps had been there—had they ever once kept their word?

The sediment of ancient sufferings and wrongs and insults was stirred up anew. For the first time ever we had taken the right road —were we to give in so soon? For the first time we had felt what it was like to be human—only to give in so quickly? A keen, a bracing breeze of mischief blew around us. We would go on! We would go on! They'd sing a different tune before we finished! They would give way! (But when would we ever be able to believe anything they said? This was as unclear as ever. That is the fate of the oppressed: they are forced to *believe* and to yield. . . .)

Once more the emotions of two hundred men were fused in a single passion; the wings of the eagle beat the air—he sailed aloft!

We lay down to conserve our strength, trying to move as little as possible and not to talk unnecessarily. Our thoughts were quite enough to occupy us.

The last crumbs in the hut had been finished long ago. No one had anything to cook or to share. In the general silence and stillness the only sound was the voices of young observers glued to the windows: they told us about all the comings and goings outside in the camp. We admired these twenty-year-olds, their enthusiasm undimmed by hunger, their determination to die on the threshold of life, with everything still before them, rather than surrender. We were envious of them, because the truth had entered our heads so late, and our spines were already setting in a servile arc.

I can, I think, now mention by name Janek Baranovsky, Volodya Trofimov, and Bogdan, the metalworker.

Suddenly, in the late afternoon of the third day, when the western sky was clearing and the setting sun could be seen, our observers shouted in anger and dismay:

"Hut nine! . . . Nine has surrendered! . . . Nine's going to the mess hall!"

We all jumped up. Prisoners from the other side of the corridor ran into our room. Through the bars, from the upper and lower bed platforms, some of us on all fours, some looking over other people's shoulders, we watched, transfixed, that sad procession.

Two hundred and fifty pathetic little figures, darker than ever against the sunset, cowed and crestfallen, were trailing slantwise across the camp. On they went, each of them glimpsed briefly in the rays of the setting sun, a dawdling, endless chain, as though those behind regretted that the foremost had set out, and were loath to follow. Some, feebler than the rest, were led by the arm or the hand, and so uncertain were their steps that they looked like blind men with their guides. Many, too, held mess tins or mugs in their hands, and this mean prisonware, carried in expectation of a supper too copious to gulp down onto constricted stomachs, these tins and cups held out like begging bowls, were more degrading and slavish and pitiable than anything else about them.

I felt myself weeping. I glanced at my companions as I wiped away my tears, and saw theirs.

Hut No. 9 had spoken, and decided for us all. It was there that the dead had been lying around for four days, since Tuesday evening.

They went into the mess hall, and it was as though they had decided to forgive the murderers in return for their bread ration and some mush.

No. 9 was a hungry hut. The teams in it were all general laborers, and very few prisoners received parcels. There were many goners among them. Perhaps they had surrendered for fear that there would be other corpses?

We went away from the windows without a word.

It was then that I learned the meaning of Polish pride, and understood their recklessly brave rebellions. The Polish engineer Jerzy Wegierski, whom I have mentioned before, was now in our team. He was serving his ninth and last year. Even when he was a work assigner no one had ever heard him raise his voice. He was always quiet, polite, and gentle.

But now—his face was distorted with rage, scorn, and suffering, as he tore his eyes away from that procession of beggars, and cried in an angry, steely voice:

"Foreman! Don't wake me for supper! I shan't be going!"

He clambered up onto the top bunk, turned his face to the wall —and didn't get up again. That night we went to eat—but he

wouldn't get up! He never received parcels, he was quite alone, he was always short of food—but he wouldn't get up. In his mind's eye the steam from a bowl of mush could not veil the ideal of freedom.

If we had all been so proud and so strong, what tyrant could have held out against us?

■

The following day, January 27, was a Sunday. They didn't drive us out to work to make up for lost time (although the bosses, of course, were itching to get back on schedule) but simply fed us, issued arrears of rations, and let us wander about the camp. We all went from hut to hut, telling each other how we had felt in the past few days, and we were all in holiday mood, as though we had won instead of losing. Besides, our kind masters promised yet again that all legitimate requests (but who knew, who was to define what was legitimate?) would be satisfied.

There was, however, one untoward little event: a certain Volodka Ponomarev, a "bitch" who had been with us throughout the strike, heard many rash speeches, and looked into many eyes, *ran away to the guardhouse,* which meant that he had run to betray us outside the camp area, where he could avoid the knife.

For me the whole essence of the criminal world crystallized in Ponomarev's flight. Their alleged nobility is just a matter of caste obligations. But when they find themselves in the whirlpool of revolution they inevitably behave treacherously. They can understand no principles, only brute force.

It was an easy guess that our bosses were getting ready to arrest the ringleaders. But they announced that, on the contrary, commissions of inquiry had arrived from Karaganda, Alma-Ata, and Moscow to look into things. A table was placed on ground stiff with hoarfrost in the middle of the camp, where we lined up for work assignment, and some high-ranking officers sat at it in sheepskin coats and felt boots and invited us to come forward with our complaints. Many prisoners went and talked to them. Notes were taken.

After work on Tuesday they assembled the foremen "to present complaints." In reality this conference was another low trick, a form of interrogation: they knew that the prisoners were boiling

with resentment and let them vent it so that they could be sure of arresting the right people.

This was my last day as a foreman: my neglected tumor was growing rapidly, and for a long time now I had been putting off my operation until, in camp terms, it was "convenient." In January and particularly during the fatal days of the hunger strike, the tumor decided for me that it was now "convenient," and it seemed to get bigger by the hour. The moment the huts were opened I showed myself to the doctors and they set a date for the operation. But I dragged myself to this last conference.

It was convened in the spacious anteroom to the bathhouse. They placed the presidium's table in front of the barbers' chairs, and seated at it were one MVD colonel, several lieutenant colonels, and some smaller fry, with our camp commanders inconspicuous in the second row, behind them. There, too, behind the backs of the presidium, sat the note-takers—making hasty notes throughout the meeting, while the front row helped them by repeating the names of speakers.

One man stood out from the rest, a certain lieutenant colonel from the Special Section or from the Organs—a quick, clever, nimble-witted villain, with a tall brow and a long face: this quick-wittedness, these narrow features, somehow made it difficult to believe that he belonged to that pack of obtuse police officials.

The foremen were reluctant to come forward, and practically had to be dragged to their feet from the close-packed benches. As soon as they started saying something of their own, they were interrupted and invited to explain why *people* were being murdered, and what were the aims of the strikers? And if a hapless foreman tried to give some sort of answer to the questions—reason for murders, nature of demands—the whole pack at once flung itself upon him: And how do you know that? So you're connected with these gangsters? Right, let's have their names!!

This was their idea of a fair and honorable inquiry into the "legitimacy" of our demands. . . .

The lofty-browed villain of a lieutenant colonel was especially quick to interrupt the speakers: he had a nimble tongue, and the advantage of impunity. With his caustic interjections he thwarted each of our attempts to present our case. From the tone which the proceedings were beginning to take you would have thought that only we faced any charges and needed to defend ourselves.

An urge to put a stop to this swelled inside me. I took the floor,

and gave my name (which was repeated for the note-taker). I rose from the bench pretty certain that there was no one in that gathering who could trot out a rounded sentence more easily than I. The only difficulty was that I had no idea what to tell them. All that is written in these pages, all that we had gone through, all that we had brooded over in all those years and all those days on hunger strike—I might as well try telling it to orang-utans as to them. They were still in some formal sense Russians, still more or less capable of understanding fairly simple Russian phrases, such as "Permission to enter!" "Permission to speak, sir!" But as they sat there all in a row at the long table, exhibiting their sleek, white, complacent, uniformly blank physiognomies, it was plain that they had long ago degenerated into a distinct biological type, that verbal communication between us had broken down beyond repair, and that we could exchange only . . . bullets.

Only the long-headed one had not yet turned into an orang-utan; his hearing and understanding were excellent. The moment I spoke he tried to interrupt me. With the whole audience paying close attention, a duel of lightning-swift repartee began.

"Where do you work?"

(What difference could that make? I wonder.)

"In the engineering shops!" I rapped out over my shoulder, and hurried on with more important things.

He came straight back at me.

"Where they make the knives?"

"No," I said, parrying his thrust. "Where they repair self-propelled excavators!" (I don't know myself how my mind worked so quickly and clearly.)

Hurry, hurry, make them be quiet and listen—that's the main thing.

The brute crouched behind the table and suddenly pounced to sink his fangs in me:

"You are here because the *bandits* delegated you?"

"No, because you invited me!" I snapped back triumphantly, and went on talking and talking.

He sprang at me once or twice more, was beaten off, and sat completely silent. I had won.

Won—but to what purpose? Just one more year! One more year to go, and the thought crushed me. I could not get out the words they deserved to hear. I could have delivered there and then an immortal speech, and been shot next day. I would have delivered

it just the same—if they had been broadcasting it throughout the world! But no, the audience was too small.

So I did not tell them that our camps followed the Fascist model, and were a symptom of the regime's degeneration. I limited myself to waving a kerosene-soaked rag under their eagerly sniffing noses. I had learned that the commander of convoy troops was sitting there, and so I deplored the unworthy conduct of the camp guards, who had ceased to resemble *Soviet fighting men,* who joined in pilfering from work sites, *and* they were boors and bullies, *and* they were murderers into the bargain. Then I portrayed the warders in the camps as a gang of greedy rogues who forced zeks to steal building materials for them. (This was quite true, except that it started with the officers sitting and listening to me.) And what a countereducational effect all this had, I said, on prisoners desirous of amendment!

I didn't like my speech myself. The only good thing about it was that we were now setting the pace.

In the interval of silence which I had won, one of the foremen, T., rose and spoke slowly, almost inarticulately, whether because that was natural to him or because he was extremely agitated.

"I used to agree . . . when other prisoners said . . . we live . . . like dogs. . . ."

The brute in the presidium bristled. T. kneaded the cap in his hands, an ugly crop-headed convict, his coarsened features contorted by his struggle to find the right words.

"But now I see that I was wrong. . . ."

The brute's face cleared.

"We live—much worse than dogs," T. rapped out with sudden emphasis, and all the foremen sat bolt upright. "A dog has only one number on his collar; we have four. Dogs are fed on meat; we're fed on fishbones. A dog doesn't get put in the cooler! A dog doesn't get shot at from watchtowers! Dogs don't get *twenty-fivers* pinned on them!"

They could interrupt whenever they liked now—he had said all that mattered.

Chernogorov rose, introducing himself as a Hero of the Soviet Union, then another foreman, and both of them spoke boldly and passionately. Their names were echoed in the presidium with heavy significance.

Maybe this can only lead to our destruction, lads. . . . And

maybe it is only by banging our heads against it that we can bring this accursed wall down.

The meeting ended in a draw.

All was quiet for a few days. The commission was seen no more, and life was so peaceful in our Camp Division that there might never have been any trouble.

An escort took me off to a hospital on the Ukrainian side. I was the first to be taken there since the hunger strike, the first swallow. Yanchenko, the surgeon who was to operate on me, had called me in for examination, but his questions and my answers were not about my tumor. He was not interested in my tumor, and I was glad to have such a reliable doctor. There was no end to his questions. His face was dark with the pain we all shared.

The same experience, in different lives, can be seen in very different perspectives. This tumor, which was to all appearances malignant—what a blow it would have been if I were a free man; how I should have suffered, how my loved ones would have wept. But in this place, where heads were so casually severed from trunks, the same tumor was just an excuse to stay in bed, and I didn't give it much thought.

I was lying in the hospital among those wounded and maimed on that bloody night. There were men beaten by the warders to a bloody pulp: they had *nothing left to lie on*—their flesh was in ribbons. One burly warder had been particularly brutal with his length of iron piping. (Memory! memory! I cannot now recall his name.) One man had already died of his wounds.

News came in thick and fast. The punitive operation had begun in the "Russian" Camp Division. Forty men had been arrested. For fear of a fresh mutiny, they did it this way: Until the very last day the bosses showed nothing but kindness, and you could only suppose that they were trying to decide which of their own number were to blame. But on the appointed day, as the work teams were passing through the gates, they noticed that the escort party which took charge of them was twice or three times its normal strength. The plan was to seize the victims where prisoners could not help one another, nor could the walls of huts or buildings under construction help them. The escort marched the columns out of the camp, and took them by different ways into the steppe, but before they had brought any of them to their destination, the officers in command gave their orders. "Halt! Weapons at the ready! Chamber cartridges! Prisoners, sit down! I shall count to

three and fire if you aren't sitting down! Everybody sit!"

Once again, as at Epiphany the year before, tricked and helpless, the slaves were pinned to the snow. Then, too, an officer had unfolded a piece of paper and read out the names and numbers of those who had to rise, leave the unresisting herd, and pass through the cordon. Next, this handful of mutineers was marched back under separate escort, or else a Black Maria rolled up to collect them. The herd, now purged of fermenting agents, was then brought to its feet and driven to work.

Our educators had shown us whether we could ever believe anything they said.

They also *plucked out* candidates for jail in the camp grounds while they were deserted for the day. And arrests easily flitted over that four-meter wall which the strike had been unable to surmount and pecked at the Ukrainian Camp Division. The very day before my operation was due, Yanchenko the surgeon was arrested and taken off to jail.

Prisoners continued to be arrested or posted to other camps—it was always difficult to know which—without the precautions observed at the beginning. Small groups of twenty or thirty were sent off somewhere. Then suddenly on February 19 they began assembling an enormous transport, some seven hundred strong. They were under special discipline: as they left the camp they were handcuffed. Fate had exacted retribution! The Ukrainians, who had taken such good care not to help the Muscovites, were thicker on the ground in this transport than we were.

True, on the point of leaving, they saluted our shattered strike. A new wood-processing plant, itself oddly enough built entirely of wood (in Kazakhstan, where there is no timber and lots of stone!), for reasons which remained officially unexplained (but I know for certain that there was arson), burst into flame at several points simultaneously, and within two hours three million rubles had gone up in smoke. For those on their way to be shot it was like a Viking's funeral—the old Scandinavian custom of burning the hero's boat together with his body.

I was lying in the recovery room. I was alone in the ward: the camp was in such a turmoil that no one could be admitted, the hospital had come to a standstill. After my room, which was at the butt end of the hut, came the morgue, where Dr. Kornfeld's body had been lying for I don't know how many days because no one had time to bury him. (Morning and evening, a warder near-

ing the end of his round would stop outside and to simplify the count embrace my room and the morgue in one inclusive gesture: "Two more *here.*" And tick us off on his clipboard.)

Pavel Boronyuk, who had also been called to join the large transport, broke through all the cordons and came to embrace me before he left. Not just our camp but the whole of creation seemed to us to be shaken, reeling before the storm. We were storm-tossed and we could not realize that outside the camp all was as calm and stagnant as ever. We felt as though we were riding great waves, on something that might sink under our feet, and that if we ever saw each other again, it would be in quite a different country!

But just in case—farewell, my friend! Farewell, all my friends!

■

That year of tedium and stupidity—my last year in Ekibastuz, and the last Stalinist year on the Archipelago—dragged on. After they had been kept in jail for a while, and no evidence against them found, a few—but only a few—were sent back into the camp. While many, very many, whom we had come to know and love over the years were taken away: some for further investigation and trial, others to the isolator* because of some indelible black mark in their dossiers (although they might long since have been more like angels than prisoners); others again to the Dzhezkazgan mines; and there was even a transport of the "mentally defective" —Kishkin the joker was squeezed in with this lot, and the doctors also fixed up Volodya Gershuni.

To replace those who had left, the stoolies crawled one by one out of the "safe deposit": timidly and apprehensively at first, then more and more brazenly. One who returned to the body of the camp was the venal "bitch" Volodka Ponomarev, once a mere lathe operator, but now in charge of the parcels room. The distribution of the precious crumbs collected by destitute families was a task which the old Chekist Maksimenko naturally entrusted to a notorious thief!

The security officers again started summoning anyone and everyone to their offices as often as they pleased. It was an airless spring. Anyone whose horns or ears stuck out too much quickly learned to keep his head down. I did not go back to my foreman's job (there were now plenty of foremen again), but became a smelter's mate in the foundry. We had to work hard that year, for

reasons which I shall explain. The one and only concession which the administration made when all our hopes and demands lay in ruins was to make us self-financing: under this system what we produced did not simply vanish into the maw of Gulag, but was priced, and 45 percent of its value was counted as our *earnings* (the rest went to the state). Of these "earnings" the camp appropriated 70 percent for the maintenance of guards, dogs, barbed wire, the camp jail, security officers, the officers responsible for discipline, for censorship, for education—in a word, all the things without which our lives would be unlivable—but the remaining 30 percent (13 ½ percent of the whole product) was credited to the personal account of the prisoner, and part of this money, though not all of it (provided you had not misbehaved, not been late, not been rude, not been a disappointment to your bosses), you could on application once a month convert into a new camp currency —vouchers—and these vouchers you could spend. The system was so contrived that the more sweat you lost, the more blood you gave, the closer you came to that 30 percent, but if you didn't feel like breaking your back, all your labor went to the camp and you got zero.

And the majority—ah, what a part the *majority* plays in our history, especially when it is carefully prepared by *weeding*—gratefully gulped down this sop from its bosses and risked working itself to death to buy condensed milk, margarine, and nasty sweets at the food counter, or get itself a second supper in the "commercial" dining room. And since work sheets were made up for the team as a whole, not for individual members, all those who didn't want to sacrifice their health for margarine still had to do it, so that their comrades could earn more.

They also started bringing films to the camp much more frequently than before. As is always the case in the camps, or in villages, or in remote workers' settlements, no one had enough respect for the spectators to announce the titles in advance—a pig, after all, is not informed in advance what is going to be poured into his trough. Nonetheless, the prisoners—could they be the same prisoners who had kept up the hunger strike so heroically that winter?!—now flocked in, grabbed seats an hour before the windows were draped, without worrying one little bit whether the film was worth it.

Bread and circuses! . . . Such a cliché that it's embarrassing to repeat it.

No one could blame people for wanting to eat their fill after so many years of hunger. But while we were there filling our bellies, comrades of ours—some who had taught us to fight, some who had shouted "No surrender!" to their hutmates in those January days, and some who had not been involved at all—were at that moment on trial somewhere, comrades of ours were being shot, or carried off to begin new sentences in isolation camps, or broken by interrogation after interrogation, bundled into cells where condemned men had scratched a forest of crosses on the walls, and the snake of a major looked in to smile a promise: "Ah, Panin! I remember you—oh, yes, I remember you! The wheels are turning, don't worry! We'll soon process you!"

A fine word that—process! You can process a man for the next world, process a man into the cooler for twenty-four hours, and a chit for a pair of secondhand trousers may also be processed. But the door slams shut, the snake has gone, smiling enigmatically, leaving you to guess, to spend a month without sleep, to beat your head against the stones wondering how exactly they intend to process you. . . .

Talking about it is easy enough.

Suddenly in Ekibastuz they got together another party of twenty men for transportation. Rather a strange party. They were gathered unhurriedly, they were not treated harshly, they were not isolated—it was almost as though they were being assembled for release. Not one of them, however, was anywhere near the end of his sentence. Nor were there any of those hard-boiled zeks among them whom the bosses try to break with spells in the cooler and special punishments; no, they were all *good* prisoners, in good standing with their superiors: there, once again, was the slippery and self-assured foreman of the vehicle repair shop, Mikhail Mikhailovich Generalov; the crafty simpleton Belousov, a foreman machinist; the engineer and technician Gultyaev; the Moscow designer Leonid Raikov, a grave and steady man with the face of a statesman; the very amiable, universally friendly Zhenka Milyukov, a lathe operator with a pert pancake face; and another lathe operator, the Georgian Kokki Kocherava, a great lover of truth, hot in defense of justice when the crowd was looking.

Where were they going? From the party's composition, obviously not to a maximum punishment prison. "Must be a nice place you're going to," they were told. "They'll be taking the guards off you." But not one of them showed a glimmer of happiness, not for

a single moment. They wagged their heads miserably, reluctantly gathered their belongings, in two minds as to whether to take them or leave them. They looked like beaten curs. Could they really have grown so fond of turbulent Ekibastuz? They even said goodbye with lips that seemed numb, and unconvincing intonations.

They were taken away.

We were not given time to forget them. Three weeks later the word went around: they've been brought back! Back here? Yes. All of them? Yes . . . only they're sitting in the staff barracks and won't go to their own huts.

This put the finishing touch to the strike of three thousand at Ekibastuz—the strike of the traitors! . . . So much for their reluctance to go! In the interrogators' offices, when they were snitching on our friends and signing their perfidious statements, they had hoped that it would all be kept under the seal of the confessional. It had of course been that way for decades: a political denunciation was regarded as an unchallengeable document, and the informer's identity was never revealed. But something about our strike—the need, perhaps, to vindicate themselves in the eyes of their superiors?—had compelled our bosses to mount a full-dress trial somewhere in Karaganda. *These* creatures were taken off one day, and when they looked into each other's anxious eyes each of them realized that he and all the others were on their way to testify in court. That wouldn't have bothered them, but they knew Gulag's postwar rule: a prisoner called away for some temporary purpose must be returned to his former camp. They were, however, promised that, by way of exception, they would be left in Karaganda! An order was in fact drafted, but incorrectly, not in due form, and Karaganda refused to have them.

They were three weeks on the road. Their guards herded them from Stolypin cars into transit camps and from transit camps into Stolypin cars, yelled at them to "sit on the ground," searched them, took away their belongings, rushed them into the bathhouse, fed them on herrings and gave them no water—they received the full treatment used to wear down ordinary uncooperative prisoners. Then they were taken under guard into the courtroom, where they faced yet again those whom they had denounced, this time to drive the final nails into their coffins, hang the locks on the doors of their solitary cells, wind back their sentences so that they would have long years to run—after which they were brought home via all those transit prisons, and flung,

without their masks, into their old camp.

They were no longer needed. Informers are like ferrymen. . . .

But was not the camp now pacified? Had not nearly a thousand men been moved out? Could anybody now prevent them from going along to the godfather's office? . . . Nevertheless, they wouldn't leave the staff building! They were on strike—they refused to enter the camp grounds! Only Kocherava made up his mind to brazen it out in his old role of lover of truth. He went to his team and said:

"We don't know why they took us! They took us all over the place, and then brought us back. . . ."

But his daring lasted just one night and one dawn. Next day he fled to the staff room and his friends.

So that what had happened had not gone for nothing, and our comrades had not fallen in vain. The atmosphere in the camp would never be as oppressive as before. Meanness was back on its throne, but very precariously. Politics were freely discussed in the huts. No work assigner or foreman would dare kick a zek or take a swing at him. Because everybody knew now how easy it is to make knives and how easily they sink home between the ribs.

Our little island had experienced an earthquake—and ceased to belong to the Archipelago.

This was how Ekibastuz felt. It is doubtful whether Karaganda felt the same. And certain that Moscow did not. The Special Camp system was beginning to collapse in one place after another, but our Father and Teacher had no inkling of it—it was not, of course, reported to him (and in any case, incapable as he was of giving up anything, he would only have relinquished *katorga* on the day his chair burst into flames beneath him). On the contrary, he planned a new great wave of arrests for 1953, perhaps in connection with a new war, and in 1952 expanded the Special Camp network accordingly. Thus it was decreed that the Ekibastuz camp should be converted from a division of Steplag, or at times Peschanlag, into the headquarters of a big new Special Camp complex in the Irtysh basin (provisionally called Dallag). So that over and above the numerous slavedrivers already there, a whole new administration of parasites arrived in Ekibastuz, and these as well we had to support by our labor.

New prisoners, too, were expected any day.

■

Meanwhile the germ of freedom was spreading. Where, though, could it go from the Archipelago? Just as the Dubovka prisoners had once brought it to us, so our comrades now carried it farther. That spring you could see this inscription written, scratched, or chiseled on every lavatory wall in Kazakhstan:

"Hail to the fighters of Ekibastuz!"

The first culling of the "center mutineers," about forty men, and the 250 most "hardened cases" among the big February transport, were taken all the way to Kengir. (The settlement was called Kengir, and the station Dzhezkazgan. This was the Third Steplag Camp Division, where the Steplag Administration and the big-bellied Colonel Chechev in person were to be found.) The other Ekibastuz prisoners to be punished were shared between the First and Second Divisions of Steplag (Rudnik).

To warn them off, the eight thousand zeks of Kengir were informed that the new arrivals were *bandits.* They were marched all the way from the station to Kengir jail's new building in handcuffs. In this way, like a legend in chains, our movement entered still servile Kengir, to awaken it, too. Here, as in Ekibastuz a year back, the bully and the informer still reigned supreme.

When he had kept our quarter thousand in jail till April, the commander of the Kengir Camp Division, Lieutenant Colonel Fedotov, decided that they had been sufficiently intimidated, and gave instructions for them to be taken out to work. The center had supplied 125 pairs of brand-new nickel-plated handcuffs, latest Fascist design—just enough, if you handcuffed them two together, for 250 prisoners (which was probably how they had determined Kengir's allocation).

With one hand free, life is not so bad! Quite a few of the lads in the column had experience of camp jails, and there were also old escapers among them (Tenno, too, was included in the transport), who knew all the peculiarities of handcuffs and explained to neighbors in the column that with one hand free there was nothing to getting these cuffs off—with a pin, or even without one.

When they got near the working area, the warders began removing handcuffs at several places in the column simultaneously so as to start the day's work without delay. Whereupon those who knew how hurriedly took off their own handcuffs and those of other prisoners and hid them under their coats: "Another warder took ours off!" It never occurred to the warders to count the handcuffs before they let the column pass, and prisoners were

never searched on entering their place of work.

So that on the very first morning, out of 125 pairs of handcuffs, our lads carried off 23! There, in the work zone, they started by smashing the cuffs with stones and hammers, but soon they had a brighter idea: wrapping them in greased paper, so that they would last better, and bricking them up in the walls and foundations of the buildings on which they were working that day (residential block No. 20, opposite the Kengir Palace of Culture), together with ideologically uninhibited covering notes: "Descendants! These houses were built by Soviet slaves! Here you see the sort of handcuffs they wore!"

The warders abused and cursed the *bandits,* and produced some rusty old cuffs for the return journey. They were very much on their guard now, but the lads still pinched another six pairs on the way in to camp. On each of the two following working days they stole a few more. And every pair cost 93 rubles.

So the bosses of Kengir declined to march the lads about in handcuffs.

A man must fight for his rights!

At about the beginning of May they gradually started transferring the Ekibastuz group from the jail to the main camp.

The time had come for them to teach the locals a little sense. As a beginning, they mounted a small demonstration: a trusty, barging in at the head of a queue, as was his *right,* was strangled, not quite fatally. This was enough to start people talking. Things are going to change around here! The new lot aren't like us. (It would be untrue to say that in the nest of camps around Dzhezkazgan stoolies had never been touched, but this had not become a *trend.* In 1951, in the jail at Rudnik, prisoners once snatched a warder's keys, unlocked the cell they wanted, and knifed Kozlauskas.)

Underground *centers* were now set up in Kengir, one Ukrainian, one "All-Russian." Knives and masks were made, ready for the *chopping*—and the whole story began all over again.

Voinilovich "hanged himself" from the bars of his cell. Others killed were the foreman Belokopyt and the loyalist stoolie Lifshitz (a member of the Revolutionary Military Committee with the forces facing Dutov during the Civil War). (Lifshitz had lived happily in the Rudnik Camp Division, where he was librarian in the Culture and Education Section, but his fame had preceded him, and he was knifed the day after his arrival at Kengir.) A

Hungarian maintenance orderly was hacked to death with axes near the bathhouse. The first to flee and blaze a trail to the "safe deposit" was Sauer, a former minister in Soviet Estonia.

But by now the camp bosses, too, knew what to do. For a long time past there had been walls between the four Camp Divisions at Kengir. The idea now was to surround each hut with a wall of its own—and eight thousand men started working on it in their spare time. They also partitioned every hut into four sections, with no communication between them. Each miniature camp area and each section was regularly locked. Ideally, of course, they would have liked to divide the whole world into one-man compartments.

The sergeant major in charge of the Kengir jail was a professional boxer. He used prisoners as punching bags. In his jail they had also invented a technique of beating prisoners with mallets through a layer of plywood, so as to leave no marks. (These *practical* MVD personnel knew that re-education was impossible without beatings and murders; and any *practical* public prosecutor would agree. But there was always the danger that some *theorist* might descend on them! It was this rather improbable visiting theorist who made the interposed plywood necessary.) One Western Ukrainian, tortured beyond endurance and afraid that he might betray his friends, hanged himself. Others behaved worse. And both *centers* were put out of business.

What is more, there were among the "fighters" some greedy rascals interested not in the success of the movement but in feathering their nests. They wanted extra food brought to them from the kitchen, and a share in other prisoners' food parcels.[3] This helped the authorities to discredit the movement and put a stop to it.

Or so they thought. But the stoolies, too, sang smaller after this first rehearsal. At least the atmosphere in Kengir was cleaner.

The seed had been sown. But the crop would be late—and a surprise.

■

3. Among those who take the path of violence this is probably inevitable. I do not see Kamo's raiders leaving themselves with empty pockets when they paid the proceeds of their bank robberies into Party funds. And can we imagine Koba, who directed their operations, leaving himself without money for wine? During the Civil War, when consumption of wine and spirits was prohibited throughout Soviet Russia, he kept a wine cellar in the Kremlin, more or less openly.

We are forever being told that individuals do not mold history, especially when they resist the course of progress, but for a quarter of a century one such individual twisted our tails as if we were sheep, and we did not even dare to squeal. Now they say that nobody understood—the rear didn't understand, the vanguard didn't understand, only the oldest of the Old Guard understood, and they chose to poison themselves in corners, shoot themselves in the privacy of their homes, or end their days as meek pensioners, rather than cry out to us from a public platform.

So the lot of the liberator fell upon us little ones. In Ekibastuz, by putting five thousand pairs of shoulders under those prison vaults, and heaving, we had at least caused a crack. Only a little one, perhaps unnoticeable at a distance, and perhaps we had overstrained ourselves—but cracks make caves collapse.

There were other disturbances besides ours, besides those in the Special Camps, but the whole bloody past has been so carefully cleaned up and painted and polished that it is impossible for me now to establish even a bare list of disorders in the camps. I did learn by chance that in 1951, in the Vakhrushevo Corrective Labor Camp on Sakhalin, five hundred men were on hunger strike for five days, with excitement running high and selective arrests, after three runaways had been savagely bayoneted outside the guardhouse. We know of a serious disturbance in Ozerlag, on September 8, 1952, after a man had been killed in the ranks at the guardhouse.

Evidently, the Stalinist camp system, particularly in the Special Camps, was nearing a crisis at the beginning of the fifties. Even in the Almighty One's lifetime the natives were beginning to tear at their chains.

There is no knowing how things would have gone if he had lived. As it was—for reasons which had nothing to do with the laws of economics or society—the sluggish and impure blood suddenly stopped flowing in the senile veins of that undersized and pockmarked *individual.*

According to the Vanguard Doctrine, no change should have resulted from this; nor did the bluecaps fear any change, though they wept outside the camp gates on March 5;* nor did the men in black jerkins dare to hope for change, though they strummed on their balalaikas (they were not let out of the camp grounds that day) when they discovered that funeral marches were being broadcast, and that black-bordered flags had been hung out—yet some

obscure convulsion, some slippage was started underground.

True, the amnesty at the end of March, 1953, known to the camps as the "Voroshilov amnesty," was utterly faithful to the spiritual legacy of the deceased—in its tenderness for thieves and its viciousness toward politicals. To curry favor with the underworld, the authors of the amnesty released the thieves upon the land like a plague of rats, leaving ordinary citizens to suffer, to bar their windows and make jails of their homes, and leaving the militia to hunt down all over again all those it had ever caught. Whereas 58's were released in the normal ratio: of the three thousand men at No. 2 Camp Division in Kengir, the number set free was . . . three.

An amnesty like this could convince those in *katorga* of one thing only: that Stalin's death had changed nothing. No mercy had ever been shown them, and it would not be shown now. If they wanted some sort of life on this earth they must fight for it!

Disturbances in the camps continued in various places in 1953—minor brawls like that in Karlag, Camp Division No. 12, and a major rebellion at Gorlag (Norilsk), about which a separate chapter would now follow if we had any material at all. But there is none.

However, the tyrant did not die in vain. Something hidden from view slipped and shifted—and suddenly, with a tinny clatter like an empty bucket falling, yet another *individual* came tumbling headlong from the very top of the ladder into the muckiest of bogs.

And now everyone—the vanguard, the rear, even the most wretched natives of Gulag—realized that a new age had arrived.

To us on the Archipelago, Beria's fall was like a thunderclap: he was the Supreme Patron, the Viceroy of the Archipelago! MVD officers were perplexed, embarrassed, dismayed; when the news was announced over the radio, they would have liked to stuff this horror back into the loudspeaker, but had instead to lay hands on the portraits of their dear, kind Protector, take them down from the walls at Steplag's headquarters. "It's all over now," Colonel Chechev said with quivering lips. (But he was mistaken. He thought that they would all be put on trial the very next day.)[4] The officers

4. As Klyuchevsky notes, the very day after the emancipation of the gentry (Decree on Rights of the Gentry, February 18, 1762), the peasants were also freed (February 19, 1861)—but after an interval of ninety-nine years.

and warders suddenly showed an uncertainty, a bewilderment even, of which the prisoners were keenly aware. The disciplinary officer of Camp Division No. 3 at Kengir, from whom no prisoner had ever received a kind look, suddenly came up to a team from the Disciplinary Barracks while they were working, sat down, and started offering them cigarettes. (He wanted to see what sparks were flying in that turbid atmosphere, and what danger could be expected from them.) "What do you say to that, then?" they asked him mockingly. "Was your top boss really an enemy of the people?" "Yes, as it turns out," said the disciplinary officer dolefully. "He was Stalin's right hand, though," said the maliciously grinning prisoners. "So that means even Stalin slipped up, doesn't it?" "Ye-e-es," said the amiable chatterbox. "Well, lads, it looks as though they'll be letting you out, if you're patient. . . ."

Beria had fallen, and he had bequeathed the "blot" on his name to his faithful Organs. Until then, no prisoner and no *free man,* if he valued his life, had dared even to think of doubting the crystalline purity of each and every MVD officer, but now it was enough to call one of these reptiles a "Beria-ite," and he was defenseless!

In Rechlag (Vorkuta) in June, 1953, the great excitement caused by Beria's removal coincided with the arrival of the mutineers transported from Karaganda and Taishet (most were Western Ukrainians). Vorkuta was still servile and downtrodden and the newly arrived zeks astounded the locals with their intransigence and their audacity.

And the process that had taken us several long months was completed here in one month's time. On July 22, the cement works, building project TETS-2, and pits No. 7, No. 29, and No. 6 struck. The prisoners at these work sites could see each other stopping work, see the wheels in the pit frames coming to a standstill. This time there was no repetition of our mistake at Ekibastuz —no hunger strike. The warders to a man immediately fled from the camp grounds, but every day, to yells of "Hand over the rations, boss man!" they trundled provisions up to the fence and shoved them through the gates. (I suppose the fall of Beria had made them so conscientious—but for that, they would have starved the prisoners out.) Strike committees were set up in the Camp Divisions affected, "revolutionary order" was established, the mess hall staff immediately stopped stealing, and although

rations were not increased, the food improved noticeably. At pit No. 7 they hung out a red flag, and at No. 29, on the side facing a nearby railway line, they put up . . . portraits of the Politburo. What could they display? . . . and what could they demand? They demanded that number patches, window bars, and locks be taken off, but touched none of these things themselves. They demanded the right to correspond, the right to receive visits, and a review of their cases.

On the first day only, attempts were made to talk the strikers out of it. Then nobody came near for a week, but machine guns were set up on the watchtowers and the Camp Divisions on strike were cordoned off. No doubt the brass was scurrying back and forth between Vorkuta and Moscow—it was hard to know what to do in the new circumstances. At the end of that week General Maslennikov; the head of Rechlag, General Derevyanko; and the Prosecutor General, Rudenko, started going around the camp with a large suite of officers (as many as forty). Everyone was assembled on the camp parade ground to meet this glittering train. The prisoners sat on the ground while the generals showered abuse on them for "sabotage" and "disgraceful behavior." At the same time, they conceded that "some of the demands are well founded" ("You can take off your number patches"; "Orders have been given" about the window bars). But the prisoners must return to work at once: "The country needs coal!" At pit No. 7 somebody shouted from the back: "And what we need is freedom, you dirty . . . !" and prisoners began to rise from the ground and disperse, leaving the generals with no audience.[5]

At this point they tore off number patches and began levering out window bars. However, a schism immediately developed, and their spirits fell. Perhaps we've gone far enough? We shan't get any more out of them. Part of the night shift reported, and the whole day shift. The pit wheels started turning again, and the various sites watched each other resume work.

Pit 29, however, was behind a hill and could not see the others. It was told that all the rest had started work—but did not believe it and did not go back. It would obviously have been no trouble

5. According to other accounts, they actually put up this slogan: "Freedom for us, coal for our country!" "Freedom for us" is in itself seditious, of course, so they hastily added "coal for our country" by way of apology.

to take delegates from pit 29 over to the other pits. But to make such a fuss over prisoners would have been demeaning, and anyway the generals were thirsting for blood: without blood there's no victory; without blood these dumb brutes would never learn.

On August 11, eleven truckloads of soldiers drove up to pit 29. The prisoners were called out onto the parade ground, toward the gate. On the other side of the gate was a serried mass of soldiers. "Report for work, or we shall take harsh measures!"

Never mind what measures. Just look at the Tommy guns. There was silence. Then the movement of human molecules in the crowd. Why risk your neck? Especially if you have a short sentence . . . Those with a year or two to go pushed their way forward. But there were others, who forced a path through the ranks—to stand in the front row, link arms, and form a barrier against the strikebreakers. The crowd was undecided. An officer tried to break the cordon, and was struck with an iron bar. General Derevyanko withdrew to one side and gave the order "Fire!"—on the crowd.

There were three volleys—with machine-gun fire in between. Sixty-six men were killed. (Who were the victims? The front rows —that is to say the most fearless, and also those who had weakened first. This is a law with a wide application—you will even find it expressed in proverbs.) The rest ran away. Guards with clubs and iron bars rushed after the zeks, beating them and driving them out of camp.

Arrests continued for three days (August 1–3) in all the Camp Divisions which had been on strike. But what could be done with those arrested? The Organs had lost their cutting edge since the death of their breadwinner. They could not rise to a formal investigation. More special trains, more transfers hither and thither, to spread the epidemic more widely. The Archipelago was becoming uncomfortably small.

For those who were left behind, there was a special punitive regime.

A number of thin wooden patches appeared on the roofs of huts at pit No. 29, covering the bullet holes made by soldiers firing over the heads of the crowd. Unknown soldiers who refused to become murderers.

But there were plenty of others who hit the target.

Near the slag heap at pit 29, somebody in Khrushchev's day

raised a cross—with a tall stem like a telegraph pole—on the communal grave. Then it was knocked down. And someone put it up again.

I do not know whether it is still standing.

Chapter 12

■

The Forty Days of Kengir

For the Special Camps there was another side to Beria's fall: by raising their hopes it confused, distracted, and disarmed the *katorzhane.* Hopes of speedy change burgeoned—and the prisoners lost their interest in hunting stoolies, and sitting in the hole for them, in strikes and rebellions. Their anger cooled. Things seemed to be improving anyway, and all they had to do was wait.

There was another aspect, too. The epaulets with blue borders (but without air force wings), hitherto the most respected, the least questionable in the armed forces at large, had suddenly become a stigma, not just in the eyes of prisoners or prisoners' relatives (who gives a damn for them?), but even perhaps in the eyes of the government.

In that fateful year, 1953, MVD officers lost their second wage ("for their stars"), which meant that henceforward they received only one salary, plus increments for length of service, polar allowances, and of course bonuses. This was a great blow to their pockets, but a still greater one to their expectations: did it mean that they were less *needed?*

The fall of Beria made it urgent for the security ministry to prove its devotion and its usefulness in some signal way. But how?

The mutinies which the security men had hitherto considered a menace now shone like a beacon of salvation. Let's have more disturbances and disorders, so that *measures will have to be taken.* Then staffs, and salaries, will not be reduced.

In less than a year the guards at Kengir opened fire several times on innocent men. There was one incident after another: and it cannot have been unintentional.[1]

They shot Lida, the young girl from the mortar-mixing gang who hung her stockings out to dry near the boundary fence.

They winged the old Chinaman—nobody in Kengir remembered his name, and he spoke hardly any Russian, but everybody knew the waddling figure with a pipe between his teeth and the face of an elderly goblin. A guard called him to a watchtower, tossed a packet of makhorka near the boundary fence, and when the Chinaman reached for it, shot and wounded him.

There was a similar incident in which the guard threw some cartridges down from the tower, ordered a prisoner to pick them up, and shot him.

Then there was the famous case of the column returning to camp from the ore-dressing plant and being fired on with dumdum bullets, which wounded sixteen men. (Another couple of dozen concealed light wounds to keep their names out of reports and avoid the risk of punishment.)

This the zeks did not take quietly—it was the Ekibastuz story over again. Kengir Camp Division No. 3 did not turn out for work three days running (but did take food), demanding punishment of the culprits.

A commission arrived and persuaded them that the culprits would be prosecuted (as though the zeks would be invited to the trial to check! . . .). They went back to work.

But in February, 1954, another prisoner was shot at the woodworking plant—"the Evangelist," as all Kengir remembered him (Aleksandr Sisoyev, I think his name was). This man had served nine years and nine months of his *tenner.* His job was fluxing arc-welding rods and he did this work in a little shed which stood near the boundary fence. He went out to relieve himself near the shed—and while he was at it was shot from a watchtower. Guards quickly ran over from the guardhouse and started dragging the dead man into the boundary zone, to make it look as though he had trespassed on it. This was too much for the zeks, who grabbed picks and shovels and drove the murderers away from the murdered man. (All this

1. The camp authorities, of course, acted similarly to speed up events in other places, for instance in Norilsk.

time near the woodworking plant stood a saddled horse belonging to Security Officer Belyaev—known as "the Wart" because he had one on his left cheek. Captain Belyaev was an enterprising sadist, and engineering a murder like this was just his style.)

The woodworking plant was in an uproar. The prisoners said that they would carry the dead man into camp on their shoulders. The camp officers would not permit it. "Why did you kill him?" shouted the prisoners. The bosses had their explanation ready: the dead man himself was to blame—he had started it by throwing stones at the tower. (Can they have had time to read his identity card; did they know that he had three months more to go and was an Evangelical Christian? . . .)

The march back was grim, and there were reminders that the bosses meant business. Machine-gunners lay here and there in the snow, ready to shoot (only too ready, as the men of Kengir had learned). Machine-gunners were also posted on the roofs of the escort troops' quarters.

This was at the same Camp Division, No. 3, which had already seen sixteen men wounded at once. Although only one man was killed on this occasion, they felt more painfully than ever that they were defenseless, doomed. Nearly a year had gone by since Stalin's death, but his dogs had not changed. In fact, nothing at all had changed.

In the evening after supper, what they did was this. The light would suddenly go out in a section, and someone invisible said from the doorway: "Brothers! How long shall we go on building and taking our wages in bullets? Nobody goes to work tomorrow!" The same thing happened in section after section, hut after hut.

A note was thrown over the wall to the Second Camp Division; they had some experience by now, and had thought about it often enough, so that they were able to call a strike there, too. In the Second Camp Division, which was multinational, the majority had *tenners* and many were coming to the end of their time—but they joined in just the same.

In the morning the men's Camp Divisions, 2 and 3, did not report for work.

This bad habit—striking without refusing the state's bread and slops—was becoming more and more popular with prisoners, and less and less popular with their bosses. They had an idea: warders and escort troops went unarmed into the striking Camp Divisions,

where two of them at a time took hold of a single zek and tried shoving and jostling him out of the hut. (Far too humane a method: only thieves deserve to be nannied like this, not enemies of the people. But since Beria's execution, no general or colonel dared take the lead and order machine-gunners to fire into a camp.) This was wasted labor: the prisoners just went off to the latrines, or sloped about the camp ground—anything rather than report for work.

They held out like this for two days. The simple idea of punishing the guard who had killed "the Evangelist" did not seem at all simple, or just, to the bosses. Instead, a colonel from Karaganda, with a large retinue, went around the camp on the second night of the strike, confident that he was in no danger, roughly waking everybody up. "How long do you intend to carry on slacking?"[2] Then, knowing nobody there, he pointed at random: "You there —outside! . . . And you . . . And you . . . Outside!" And these chance people the valiant and forceful manager of men consigned to jail, imagining that this was the most sensible way to deal with slackers. The Latvian Will Rosenberg, when he saw this senseless high-handedness, said to the colonel: "I'll go, too!" "Go on, then," the colonel readily agreed. He probably did not even realize that this was a protest, or that there were any grounds for protest.

That same night it was announced that the liberal feeding policy was at an end and that those who did not go out to work would be put on short rations. Camp Division No. 2 went to work in the morning. No. 3 didn't turn out for the third morning running. The jostling and shoving tactics were now applied to them, but with heavier forces: all the officers serving in Kengir, those who had come in to help, and those who were with investigating commissions, were mobilized. The officers picked a hut and entered in strength, dazzling the prisoners with the coming and going of white fur hats and the brilliance of their epaulets, made their way, stooping, among the bunks, and with no sign of distaste sat down in their clean breeches on dirty pillows stuffed with shavings. "Come on, move up a bit—can't you see I'm a lieutenant colonel!" The lieutenant colonel kept this up, shifting his seat with arms akimbo, until he shoved the owner of the mattress out into the

2. "Slacking" was a word much used in official language after the Berlin disturbances of June, 1953. If ordinary people somewhere in Belgium fight for a raise, it's called "the righteous anger of the people," but if simple people in our country struggle for black bread they are "slackers."

passageway, where warders grabbed him by his sleeves and hustled him along to the work-assignment area or, if he was still too stubborn, into jail. (The limited capacity of the two Kengir jails was a great nuisance to the staff: they held about five hundred men.)

The strike was mastered, regardless of cost to the dignity and privileges of officers. This sacrifice was forced on them by the ambiguities of the time. They had no idea what was required of them, and mistakes could be dangerous! If they showed excessive zeal and shot down a crowd, they might end up as henchmen of Beria. But if they weren't zealous enough, and didn't energetically push the strikers out to work—exactly the same thing could happen.[3] Moreover, by their massive personal participation in putting down the strike, the MVD officers demonstrated as never before the importance of their epaulets to the defense of holy order, the impossibility of reducing staffs, and their individual bravery.

All previously proved methods were also employed. In March and April, several contingents of prisoners were transferred to other camps. (The plague crept further!) Some seventy men (Tenno among them) were sent to maximum security prisons, with the classic formula: "All *measures of correction* exhausted, corrupts other prisoners, not suitable for labor camp." Lists of those dispatched to maximum security jails were posted in the camp to deter others. And to make the self-financing system—Gulag's New Economic Policy, as it were—a more satisfactory substitute for freedom and justice, a wide selection of foodstuffs was delivered to the previously ill-stocked sale points. They even—incredibly!—started giving prisoners advances so that they could buy these provisions. (Gulag giving the natives credit! Who had ever heard of such a thing!)

So, for the second time in Kengir, a ripening abscess was lanced before it could burst.

But then the bosses went too far. They reached for the biggest stick they could use on the 58's—for the thieves! (Why, indeed, should they dirty their hands and sully their epaulets when they had the "class allies"?)

3. Colonel Chechev, for one, was defeated by this conundrum. He retired after the February events and we lose track of him—to discover him later living on his pension in Karaganda. We do not know how soon the camp commander, Colonel Yevsigneyev, left Ozerlag. "An excellent manager . . . a modest comrade," he became deputy head of the Bratsk hydroelectric station. (No hint of this in Yevtushenko's poem.)*

The bosses now renounced the whole principle of the Special Camps, acknowledged that if they segregated political prisoners they had no means of making themselves *understood,* and just before the May Day celebrations brought in and distributed throughout the mutinous No. 3 Camp Division 650 men, most of them thieves, some of them petty offenders (including many minors). "A *healthy batch* is joining us!" the bosses spitefully warned the 58's. "Now you won't dare breathe." And they called on the new arrivals to "put our house in order!"

The bosses understood well enough how the restorers of order would begin: by stealing, by preying on others, and so setting every man against his fellows. And the bosses smiled the friendly smile which they reserve for such people when the thieves heard that there was a women's camp nearby and asked in their impudent beggar's whine for a "look at the women, boss man!"

But here again we see how unpredictable is the course of human emotions and of social movements! Injecting in Kengir No. 3 a mammoth dose of tested ptomaine, the bosses obtained not a pacified camp but the biggest mutiny in the history of the Gulag Archipelago.

■

Though they seem to be so scattered and so carefully sealed off, the islands of Gulag are linked by the transit prisons, so that they breathe the same air and the same vital fluids flow in their veins. Thus the massacre of stoolies, the hunger strikes, the strikes, the disturbances in the Special Camps, had not remained unknown to the thieves. By 1954, so we are told, it was noticeable in transit prisons that *the thieves came to respect the politicals.*

If this is so—what prevented us from gaining their respect earlier? All through the twenties, thirties, and forties, we blinkered philistines, preoccupied as we were with our own importance to the world, with the contents of our duffel bags, with the shoes or trousers we had been allowed to retain, had conducted ourselves in the eyes of the thieves like characters on the comic stage: when they plundered our neighbors, intellectuals of world importance like ourselves, we shyly looked the other way and huddled together in our corners; and when the submen crossed the room to give us the treatment, we expected, of course, no help from neighbors, but obligingly surrendered all we had to these ugly custom-

ers in case they bit our heads off. Yes, our minds were busy elsewhere, and our hearts were trained for other things! We had never expected to meet an enemy so vile and so cruel! We who were racked by the twists and turns of Russian history, were ready to die only in public, beautifully, with the whole world looking on, and only for the final salvation of all mankind. It might have been better if we had been far less clever. Perhaps when we first stepped into the cell of a transit prison we should have been prepared, every man of us in the place, to take a knife between the ribs and slump in a wet corner on the slime around the latrine bucket, in a sordid brawl with those ratmen whom the boys in blue had thrown in to gnaw our flesh. If we had, perhaps we should have suffered far fewer losses, found our courage sooner, and, who knows, shoulder to shoulder with these very same thieves smashed Stalin's camps to smithereens? What reason, indeed, had the thieves to *respect* us? . . .

Well, then, when they arrived in Kengir the thieves had already heard a thing or two; they came expecting to find a fighting spirit among the politicals. And before they could get their bearings, and exchange doggy compliments with the camp authorities, their atamans were visited by some calm, broad-shouldered lads who sat down to *talk about life* and told them this: "We are *representatives.* You've heard all about the *chopping* in the Special Camps, or if you haven't we'll tell you. We can make knives as good as yours now. There are six hundred of you, two thousand six hundred of us. Think it over, and take your choice. If you try squeezing us we'll cut the lot of you up."

Now, this was a wise step, if ever there was one, and long overdue—rounding on the thieves with everything they had. Seeing them as the *main enemy!*

Of course, nothing would have suited the boys in blue better than a free-for-all. But the thieves looked at the odds and saw that it wouldn't pay to take on the newly emboldened 58's one against four. Their protectors, after all, were beyond the camp limits, and a fat lot of use anyway! What thief had ever respected them? Whereas the alliance which our lads offered was a novel and jolly adventure, which might also, they thought, clear a way over the fence into the women's camp.

Their answer, then, was: "No, we're wiser than we used to be. We're with you fellows!"

The conference has not been recorded for history and the names

of its participants are not preserved in protocols. This is a pity. They were clever lads.

In their first huts while they were still in the quarantine period, the *healthy contingent* held a housewarming party—making bonfires of their bunks and lockers on the cement floor, and letting smoke pour through the windows. They expressed their disapproval of locks on hut doors by stuffing the keyholes with wood chips.

For two weeks the thieves behaved as though they were at a health resort: they reported for work, but all they did was sun themselves. The bosses, of course, would not dream of putting them on short rations, but for lack of funds could not pay wages to those of whom they had such bright hopes. Soon, however, vouchers turned up in the possession of the thieves, and they went to the stall to buy food. The bosses were heartened by this sign that the *healthy element* had begun thieving after all. But they were ill-informed, they were mistaken: a collection in aid of the thieves had been taken up among the politicals (also, no doubt, part of the compact—otherwise the thieves would not have been interested) and this was how they had come by their vouchers! An event too far out of the ordinary for the bosses to guess at it!

No doubt the novelty and unfamiliarity of the game made it great fun for the criminals, especially the juveniles: treating "Fascists" politely, not entering their sections without permission, not sitting down on their bunks without invitation.

Paris in the last century took some of its criminals (it seems to have had plenty of them) into the militia, and called them the *mobiles.* A very apt description! They are such a mobile breed that they cannot rest quietly inside the shell of an ordinary humdrum existence, but inevitably break it. They had made it a rule not to steal, and it was unethical to slog away for the government, but they had to do something! The young cubs amused themselves by snatching off warders' caps, prancing over the hut roofs and over the high wall from Camp Division No. 3 to No. 2 during evening roll call, confusing the count, whistling, hooting, scaring the *towers* at night. They would have gone further and climbed into the women's camp if the service yard and its sentries had not been in the way.

When disciplinary officers, or education officers, or security men, looked in for a friendly chat with thieves in their hut, the

juveniles hurt their feelings badly by pulling notebooks and purses out of their pockets, or suddenly leaning out from a top bunk and switching godfather's cap peak-backward. Gulag had never encountered such conduct—but then the whole situation was unprecedented! They had always in the past regarded their foster fathers in Gulag as fools, and the more earnestly those turkey cocks believed that they were successfully *reforging* the thieves, the more the thieves despised them. They were ready to burst with scornful laughter as they stepped onto a platform or before a microphone to talk about beginning a new life behind a wheelbarrow. But so far there had been no point in quarreling with the bosses. Now, however, the compact with the politicals turned the newly released forces of the thieves against the bosses alone.

Thus the Gulag authorities, because they had only the mean intelligence of bureaucrats, and lacked the higher intellectual powers of human beings, had themselves prepared the Kengir explosion: to begin with, by the senseless shootings, and then by pouring the thieves into the camp like petrol fumes into an overheated atmosphere.

Events followed their inevitable course. It was *impossible* for the politicals not to offer the thieves a choice between war and alliance. It was *impossible* for the thieves to refuse an alliance. And it was *impossible* for the alliance, once concluded, to remain inactive—if it had, it would have fallen apart and civil war would have broken out.

They had to start something, no matter what! And since those who *start something* are strung up if they are 58's, with nooses around their necks, whereas if they are thieves they are only mildly rebuked in their political discussion period, the thieves made the obvious suggestion: we'll start, and you join in!

It should be noted that the whole Kengir camp complex formed a single rectangle, with one common outer fence, and was subdivided across its width into separate camp areas. First came Camp Division No. 1 (the women's camp), then the service yard (we have already talked about the industrial importance of its workshops), then No. 2, then No. 3, and then the prison area, with its two jailhouses, an old and a new building in which not only inmates of the camp but free inhabitants of the settlement were locked up from time to time.

The obvious first objective was to capture the service yard, in which all the camp's food stores were also situated. They began

the operation in the afternoon of a nonworking day (Sunday, May 16, 1954). First the *mobiles* climbed onto the roofs of their huts and perched at intervals along the wall between Camp Divisions 2 and 3. Then at the command of their leaders, who stayed up aloft, they jumped down into Camp Division No. 2 with sticks in their hands, formed up in a column, and marched in line along the central road. This ran along the axis of No. 2 right up to the inner gates of the service yard, which brought them to a halt.

All these quite undisguised operations took a certain time, during which the warders managed to get themselves organized and obtain instructions. And here is something extremely interesting! The warders started running around to the huts of the 58's, appealing to these men whom they had treated like dirt for thirty-five years: "Look out, lads! The thieves are on their way to break into the women's camp. They are going to rape your wives and daughters! Come and help us. Let's stop them at it!" But a treaty is a treaty, and those who, not knowing about it, seemed eager to follow the bosses were stopped. Normally the 58's would have risen to this bait, but this time the warders found no helpers among them.

Just how the warders would have defended the women's camp against their favorites, no one knows—but first they had to think of defending the storerooms around the service yard. The gates of the service yard were flung open and a platoon of unarmed soldiers came out to meet the attackers, with Belyaev the Wart leading them from behind—perhaps devotion to duty had kept him inside the camp on a Sunday out of zeal, or perhaps he was officer of the day. The soldiers started pushing the *mobiles* away, and broke their lines. Without resorting to their clubs, the thieves began retreating to their own Camp Division No. 3, scaling the wall once again, from which the rear guard covered their retreat by throwing stones and mud bricks at the soldiers.

No thief, of course, was arrested as a result of this. The authorities still saw it as nothing but high-spirited mischief, and let the camp Sunday quietly run its course. Dinner was handed around without incident, and in the evening as soon as it was dark they started showing a film, *Rimsky-Korsakov,* using a space near the mess hall as an open-air cinema.

But before the gallant composer could withdraw from the conservatory in protest against oppression and persecution, the tinkle of broken glass could be heard from the lamps around the

boundary zone: the *mobiles* were shooting at them from slingshots to put out the lights over the camp area. They swarmed all over Camp Division No. 2 in the darkness, and their shrill bandit whistles rent the air. They broke the service yard gate down with a beam, and from there made a breach in the wall with a section of railway line and were through to the women's camp. (There were also some of the younger 58's with them.)

In the light of the flares fired from the towers, our friend Captain Belyaev, the security officer, broke into the service yard from outside the camp, through the guardhouse, with a platoon of Tommy-gunners, and for the first time in the history of Gulag opened fire on the "class allies"! Some were killed and dozens wounded. Behind them came red tabs to bayonet the wounded. Behind them again, observing the usual division of punitive labor, already adopted in Ekibastuz, in Norilsk, and in Vorkuta, ran warders with iron crowbars, and with these they battered the wounded to death. (That night the lights went up in the operating room of the hospital in Camp Division No. 2, and Fuster, the surgeon, a Spanish prisoner, went to work.)

The service yard was now firmly held by the punitive forces, and machine-gunners were posted there. But the Second Camp Division (the mobiles had played their overture, and the politicals now came onto the stage) erected a barricade facing the service yard gate. The Second and Third Camp Divisions had been joined together by a hole in the wall, and there were no longer any warders, any MVD authority, in them.

But what of those who had succeeded in breaking through to the women's camp, and were now cut off there? Events outsoared the casual contempt which the thieves feel for *females.* When shots rang out in the service yard, those who had broken into the women's camp ceased to be greedy predators and became comrades in misfortune. The women hid them. Unarmed soldiers came in to catch them, then others with guns. The women got in the way of the searchers, and resisted attempts to move them. The soldiers punched the women and struck them with their gun butts, dragged some of them off to jail (thanks to someone's foresight, there was a jailhouse in the women's camp area), and shot at some of the men.

Finding its punitive force under strength, the command brought into the women's camp some "black tabs"—soldiers from a construction battalion stationed in Kengir. But they would have

nothing to do with this *"unsoldierly work"* and had to be taken away.

At the same time, here in the women's camp was the best political excuse which the executioners could offer their superiors in self-defense! They were not at all stupid! Whether they had read something of the sort or thought of it for themselves, on Monday they let photographers into the women's camp, together with two or three of their own apes, disguised as prisoners. The impostors started pulling women about, while the photographers took pictures. Obviously it was to save defenseless women from such bullying that Captain Belyaev had been compelled to open fire!

In the morning hours on Monday, there was growing tension on both sides of the barricade and the broken gates to the service yard. The yard had not been cleared of bodies. Machine-gunners lay at their guns, which were trained on the gate. In the liberated men's camps they were breaking bunks to arm themselves, and making shields out of boards and mattresses. Prisoners shouted across the barricade at the butchers, who shouted back. Something had to give; the position was far too precarious. The zeks on the barricade were thinking of taking the offensive themselves. Some emaciated men took their shirts off, got up on the barricade, pointed to their bony chests and ribs, and shouted to the machine-gunners: "Come on, then, shoot! Strike down your fathers! Finish us off!"

Suddenly a soldier ran into the yard with a note for the officer. The officer gave orders for the bodies to be taken up and the red tabs left the yard with them.

For five minutes the barricade was silent and mistrustful. Then the first zeks peeped cautiously into the yard. It was empty, except for the black prison caps lying around, dead men's caps with stitched-on number patches.

(They discovered later that the order to clear the yard had been given by the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Kazakh Republic, who had just flown in from Alma-Ata. The bodies carried away were driven out into the steppe and buried, to rule out post-mortem examination if someone later called for it.)

Shouts of "Hurrah" went through the ranks, and they poured into the yard and on into the women's camp. They enlarged the breach. Then they freed the women in the jailhouse—and the whole camp was united! The whole of the main camp area was free —only No. 4 Division (the camp jail) was left.

There were *four* red-tabbed sentries on every tower—no lack of ears to cram with insults! Prisoners stood facing the towers and shouted at them (the women, naturally, louder than anyone): "You're worse than Fascists! . . . Bloodsuckers! . . . Murderers!"

A priest or two were of course easily found in the camp—and there in the morgue a requiem was sung for those who had been killed or died later from their wounds.

How can we say what feelings wrung the hearts of those eight thousand men, who for so long and until yesterday had been slaves with no sense of fellowship, and now had united and freed themselves, not fully perhaps, but at least within the rectangle of those walls, and under the gaze of those quadrupled guards? Even the bedridden fast in locked huts at Ekibastuz was felt as a moment of contact with freedom! This now was the February Revolution! So long suppressed, the brotherhood of man had broken through at last! We loved the thieves! And the thieves loved us! (There was no getting away from it: they had sealed the friendship in blood! They had departed from their *code!*) Still more, of course, we loved the women, and now we were living as human beings should, there were women at our side once more, and they were our sisters and shared our fate.

Proclamations appeared in the mess hall: "Arm yourselves as best you can, and attack the soldiers first!" The most passionate among them hastily scrawled their slogans on scraps of newspaper (there was no other paper) in black or colored letters: "Bash the Chekists, boys!" "Death to the stoolies, the Cheka's stooges!" Here, there, everywhere you turned there were meetings and orators. Everybody had suggestions of his own. Come on, think—you're permitted to think now: Who gets your vote? What demands shall we put forward? What is it we want? Put Belyaev on trial—that's understood! Put the murderers on trial!—goes without saying. What else? . . . No locking huts; take the numbers off! But beyond that? . . . Beyond that came the most frightening thing —the real reason why they had *started it all,* what they really wanted. We want freedom, of course, just freedom—but who can give it to us? The judges who condemned us in Moscow. As long as our complaints are against Steplag or Karaganda, they will go on talking to us. But if we start complaining against Moscow . . . we'll all be buried in this steppe.

Well, then—what do we want? To break holes in the walls? To run off into the wilderness? . . .

Those hours of freedom! Immense chains had fallen from our arms and shoulders! No; whatever happened, there could be no regrets! That one day made it all worthwhile!

Late on Monday, a delegation from command HQ arrived in the seething camp. The delegation was quite well disposed, they did not glare savagely at the prisoners, they had no Tommy-gunners with them, no one would ever take them for henchmen of the bloody Beria. Our side learned that generals had flown in from Moscow—Bochkov, from Gulag HQ, and the Deputy Procurator General, Vavilov. (They had served in Beria's time, but why reopen old wounds?) They found the prisoners' demands *fully justified!* (We simply gasped: justified? We aren't rebels, then? No, no, they're *quite* justified!) "Those responsible for the shooting will be made to answer for it!" "But why did they beat up women?" "Beat up women?" The delegation was shocked. "That can't be true." Anya Mikhalevich brought in a succession of battered women for them to see. The commission was deeply moved: "We'll look into it, never fear!" "Beasts!" Lyuba Bershadskaya shouts at the general. There were other shouts: "No locks on huts!" "We won't lock them any more." "Take the numbers off!" "Certainly we'll take them off," comes the assurance from a general whom the prisoners had never laid eyes on (and would never see again). "The holes in the wall between camp areas must remain!" They were getting bolder. "We must be allowed to mix with each other." "All right, mix as much as you like," the general agreed. "Let the holes remain." Right, brothers, what else do we want? We've won, we've won! We raised hell for just one day, enjoyed ourselves, let off steam—and we won! Although some among us shake their heads and say, "It's a trick, it's all a trick," we believe it! We believe our bosses; they're not so bad, on the whole! We believe because that's our easiest way out of the situation. . . .

All that the downtrodden can do is go on hoping. After every disappointment they must find fresh reason for hope.

So on Tuesday, May 18, all the Kengir Camp Divisions went out to work, reconciling themselves to thoughts of their dead.

That morning the whole affair could still have ended quietly. But the exalted generals assembled in Kengir would have considered such an outcome a defeat for themselves. They could not seriously admit that prisoners were in the right! They could not

seriously punish soldiers of the MVD! Their mean understanding could draw only one moral: the walls between Camp Divisions were not strong enough! They must ring them with hoops of fire!

And that day the zealous commanders harnessed for work people who had lost the habit years or decades ago. Officers and warders donned aprons; those who knew how to handle them took up trowels; soldiers released from the towers wheeled barrows and carried hods; discharged soldiers who had stayed around the camps hauled and handed up mud bricks. And by evening the breaches were bricked up, the broken lamps were replaced, prohibited zones had been marked along inside walls and sentries posted at the ends with orders to fire!

When the columns of prisoners returned to camp in the evening after giving a day's work to the state, they were hurried in to supper before they knew what was happening, so that they could be locked up quickly. On orders from the general, the jailers had to play for time that first evening—that evening of blatant dishonesty after yesterday's promises; later on the prisoners would get used to it and slip back into the rut.

But before nightfall the long-drawn whistles heard on Sunday shrilled through the camp again—the Second and Third Camp Divisions were calling to each other like hooligans on a spree. (These whistles were another useful contribution from the thieves to the common cause.) The warders took fright, and fled from the camp grounds without finishing their duties. Only one officer slipped up. Medvedev, a first lieutenant in the quartermaster service, stayed behind to finish his business and was held prisoner till morning.

The camp was in the hands of the zeks, but they were divided. The towers opened fire with machine guns on anyone who approached the inside walls. They killed several and wounded several. Once again zeks broke all the lamps with slingshots, but the towers lit up the camp with flares. This was where the Second Camp Division found a use for the quartermaster: they tied him, with one of his epaulets torn off, to a table, and pushed it up to the strip near the boundary fence, with him yelling to his people: "Don't shoot, it's me! This is me, don't shoot!"

They battered at the barbed wire, and the new fence posts, with long tables, but it was impossible, under fire, either to break through the barrier or to climb over it—so they had to burrow under. As always, there were no shovels, except those for use in

case of fire, inside the camp. Kitchen knives and mess tins were put into service.

That night—May 18–19—they burrowed under all the walls and again united all the divisions and the service yard. The towers had stopped shooting now, and there were plenty of tools in the service yard. The whole daytime work of the epauleted masons had gone to waste. Under cover of night they broke down the boundary fences, knocked holes in the walls, and widened the passages, so that they would not become traps (in the next few days they made them twenty meters wide).

That same night they broke through the wall around the Fourth Camp Division—the prison area—too. The warders guarding the jails fled, some to the guardhouse, some to the towers, where ladders were let down for them. The prisoners wrecked the interrogation offices. Among those released from the jail were those who on the morrow would take command of the rising: former Red Army Colonel Kapiton Kuznetsov (a graduate of the Frunze Academy, no longer young; after the war he had commanded a regiment in Germany, and one of his men had run away to the Western part—this was why he had been imprisoned; he was in the camp jail for "slanderous accounts of camp life" in letters sent out through free workers); and former First Lieutenant Gleb Sluchenkov (he had been a prisoner of war, and some said a Vlasovite).

In the "new" jailhouse were some inhabitants of the Kengir settlement, minor offenders. At first they thought that nationwide revolution had broken out, and rejoiced in their unexpected freedom. But they quickly discovered that the revolution was too localized, and the minor offenders loyally returned to their stone sack and dutifully lived there without guards throughout the rebellion—though they did go to eat in the mutinous zeks' mess hall.

Mutinous zeks! Who three times already had tried to reject this mutiny and this freedom. They did not know how to treat such gifts, and feared rather than desired them. But a force as relentless as the surf breaking on the shore had carried them helplessly into this rebellion.

What else could they do? Put their faith in promises? They would be cheated again, as the slavemasters had shown so clearly the day before, and so often in the past. Should they kneel in submission? They had spent years on their knees and earned no clemency. Should they give themselves up and take

their punishment today? Today, or after a month of freedom, punishment would be equally cruel at the hands of those whose courts functioned like clockwork: if *quarters* were given out, it would be all around, with no one left out!

The runaway escapes to enjoy just one day of freedom! In just the same way, these eight thousand men had not so much raised a rebellion as *escaped to freedom,* though not for long! Eight thousand men, from being slaves, had suddenly become free, and now was their chance to . . . live! Faces usually grim softened into kind smiles.[4] Women looked at men, and men took them by the hand. Some who had corresponded by ingenious secret ways, without even seeing each other, met at last! Lithuanian girls whose weddings had been solemnized by priests on the other side of the wall now saw their lawful wedded husbands for the first time—the Lord had sent down to earth the marriages made in heaven! For the first time in their lives, no one tried to prevent the sectarians and believers from meeting for prayer. Foreigners, scattered about the Camp Divisions, now found each other and talked about this strange Asiatic revolution in their own languages. The camp's food supply was in the hands of the prisoners. No one drove them out to work line-up and an eleven-hour working day.

The morning of May 19 dawned over a feverishly sleepless camp which had torn off its number patches. Posts with broken lamps sprawled against the wire fences. Even without their help the zeks moved freely from zone to zone by the trenches dug under the wires. Many of them took their street clothes from the storerooms and put them on. Some of the lads crammed fur hats on their heads; shortly there would be embroidered shirts, and on the Central Asians bright-colored robes and turbans. The gray-black camp would be a blaze of color.

Orderlies went around the huts summoning us to the big mess hall to elect a commission for negotiations with the authorities and for self-government, as it modestly and timidly described itself.

For all they knew, they were electing it just for a few hours, but it was destined to become the government of Kengir camp for forty days.

■

4. A hostile witness, Makeyev, noted this.

Had all this taken place two years earlier, if only for fear that *He* would find out, the bosses of Steplag would not have delayed a moment before giving the classic order "Don't spare the bullets!" and shooting the whole crowd penned within these walls. If it had proved necessary to knock off four thousand—or all eight thousand—they would not have felt the slightest tremor, because they were shockproof.

But the complexity of the situation in 1954 made them vacillate. Even Vavilov, even Bochkov, sensed that a new breeze was stirring in Moscow. Quite a few prisoners had been shot in Kengir already, and they were still wondering how to make it look legal. So a delay was created, which meant time for the rebels to begin their new life of independence.

In its very first hours the political line of the revolt had to be determined: to be or not to be? Should it follow in the wake of the simple-hearted messages scrawled over the columns of the robot press: "Bash the Chekists, boys"?

As soon as he left the jail and began to take charge—whether through force of circumstances, or because of his military skill, or on the advice of friends, or moved by some inner urge—Kapiton Ivanovich immediately adopted the line of those orthodox Soviet citizens who were not very numerous in Kengir and were usually pushed into the background. "Cut out all this scribbling" (of leaflets), "nip the evil of counter-revolution in the bud, frustrate those who want to *take advantage* of events in our camp!" These phrases I quote from notes kept by another member of the commission, A. F. Makeyev, of an intimate discussion in Pyotr Akoyev's storeroom. The orthodox citizens nodded approval of Kuznetsov: "Yes, if we don't stop those leaflets, we shall all get extra time."

In the first hours, during the night, as he went around all the huts haranguing himself hoarse, again at the meeting in the mess hall next morning, and on many subsequent occasions, whenever he encountered extremist sentiments and the bitter rage of men whose lives were trodden so deep into the mire that they felt they had nothing more to lose, Kuznetsov endlessly, tirelessly repeated the same words:

"Anti-Sovietism will be the death of us. If we display anti-Soviet slogans we shall be crushed immediately. They're only waiting for an excuse to crush us. If we put out leaflets like that, they will be fully justified in shooting. Our salvation lies in loyalty. We must

talk to Moscow's representatives *in a manner befitting Soviet citizens!*"

Then, in a louder voice: "We shall not permit such behavior on the part of a few provocateurs!" (However, while he was making these speeches, people on the bunks were loudly kissing. They didn't take in much of what he said.)

When a train carries you in the wrong direction and you decide to jump off, you have to jump *with* the motion of the train, and not *against* it. The inertial force of history is just as hard to resist. By no means everyone wanted it that way, but the reasonableness of Kuznetsov's line was immediately perceived, and it prevailed. Very soon slogans were hung up all over the camp, in big letters easily legible from the towers and the guardhouse:

"Long live the Soviet Constitution!"

"Long live the Presidium of the Central Committee!"

"Long live the Soviet regime!"

"The Central Committee must send one of its members and review our cases!"

"Down with the murdering Beria-ites!"

"Wives of Steplag officers! Aren't you ashamed to be the wives of murderers?"

Although it was clear as could be to the majority in Kengir that all the millions of acts of rough justice, near and distant, had taken place under the watery sun of that very constitution, and had been sanctioned by a Politburo consisting of the *very same members*, all they felt able to do was write "long live" *that* constitution and *that* Politburo. As they reread their slogans, the rebel prisoners now felt themselves on firm legal ground and began to be less anxious: their movement was not hopeless.

Over the mess hall, where the elections had just taken place, a flag was raised which the whole settlement could see. It hung there long afterward: white, with a black border, and the red hospitalers' cross in the middle. In the international maritime code this flag means:

"Ship in distress! Women and children on board."

Twelve men were elected to the Commission, with Kuznetsov at their head. The members of the Commission assumed individual responsibilities, and created the following departments:

Agitation and propaganda (under the Lithuanian Knopkus, who had been sent for punishment from Norilsk after the rising there).

Services and maintenance.

Food.

Internal security (Gleb Sluchenkov).

Military.

Technical (perhaps the most remarkable branch of this camp government).

Former Major Mikheyev was made responsible for contacts with the authorities. The Commission also had among its members one of the atamans of the thieves, and he, too, was in charge of something. There were also some women (apparently, Shakhnovskaya, an economist and Party member already gray; Suprun, an elderly teacher from the Carpathians; and Lyuba Bershadskaya).

But did the real moving spirits behind the revolt join this Commission? It seems that they did not. The *centers*, especially the Ukrainian Center (not more than a quarter of those in the whole camp were Russian), evidently kept themselves to themselves. Mikhail Keller, a Ukrainian partisan, who from 1941 had fought alternately against the Germans and the Soviet side, and had publicly axed a stoolie in Kengir, appeared at meetings of the Commission as an observer from the *other* staff.

The Commission worked openly in the offices of the Women's Camp Division, but the Military Department moved its command post (field staff) out to the bathhouse in Camp Division No. 2. The departments set to work. The first few days were particularly hectic: there was so much planning and arranging to be done.

First of all they had to fortify their position. (Mikheyev, in expectation of the inevitable military action to crush them, was against creating defenses of any kind, but Sluchenkov and Knopkus insisted.) Great piles of mud bricks had risen, where the breaches in the inner walls were widened and cleared. They used these bricks to make barricades facing all the guard points—exits from within, entrances from without—which remained in the hands of the jailers, and any one of which might open at any minute to admit the punitive force. There were plenty of coils of barbed wire in the service yard. With this they made entanglements and scattered them about the threatened approaches. Nor

did they omit to put out little boards saying: "Danger! Minefield!"

This was one of the first of the Technical Department's bright ideas. The department's work was surrounded by great secrecy. In the occupied service yard the Technical Department set aside secret premises, with a skull and crossbones drawn on the door, and the legend "High Tension—100,000 volts." Only the handful of men who worked there were allowed in. So that even the prisoners did not get to know what the Technical Department's activities were. A rumor was very soon put about that it was making secret weapons of a chemical nature. Since both zeks and bosses knew very well what clever engineers there were in the camp, it was easy for a superstitious conviction to get around that they could do anything, even invent a weapon which no one had yet thought of in Moscow. As for making a few miserable mines, using the reagents which were there in the service yard—what was to stop them? So the boards saying "Minefield" were taken seriously.

Another weapon was devised: boxes of ground glass at the entrance to every hut (to throw in the eyes of the Tommy-gunners).

The teams were kept just as they had been, but were now called platoons, while the huts were called detachments, and detachment commanders were named, subordinate to the Military Department. Mikhail Keller was put in charge of all guard duties. Vulnerable places were occupied, according to a precise roster, by pickets, which were reinforced for the night hours. A man will not run away and in general will show more courage in the presence of a woman: with this masculine psychological trait in mind, the rebels organized mixed pickets. Besides the many loud-mouthed women in Kengir, there proved to be many brave ones, especially among the Ukrainian girls, who were the majority in the women's camp.

Without waiting this time for master's kind permission, they began taking the window bars down themselves. For the first two days, before the bosses thought of cutting the power supply to the camp, the lathes were still working in the shops and they made a large number of *pikes* from these window bars by grinding down and sharpening their ends. The smiths and the lathe operators worked without a break in those first days, making weapons: knives, halberds, and sabers (which were particularly popular with the thieves; they decorated the hilts with jingles and colored

leather). Others were seen with bludgeons in their hands.

The pickets shouldered pikes as they went to take up their posts for the night. The women's platoon, on their way at night to rooms provided in the men's camp, so that they could rush out to meet the attackers if the alarm was raised (it was naïvely assumed that the butchers would be ashamed to hurt women), also bristled with pikes.

All this would have been impossible, would have been ruined by mockers or lechers, if the stern and cleansing wind of rebellion had not been blowing through the camp. In our age these pikes, these sabers, were children's toys, but for these people, prison—prison behind them, and prison before them—was no game. The pikes were playthings, but this was what fate had sent—their first chance to defend their freedom. In the puritanical air of that revolutionary springtime, when the presence of women on the barricades itself became a weapon, men and women behaved with proper dignity, and with dignity carried their pikes, points skyward.

If anyone during those days entertained hopes of vile orgies, it was the blue-epauleted bosses, on the other side of the fence. Their calculation was that left alone for a week, the prisoners would drown in their debauchery. That was the picture they painted for the inhabitants of the settlement—prisoners mutinying for the sake of sexual indulgence. (Obviously, there was no other lack they could feel in their comfortable existence.)[5]

The main hope of the authorities was that the thieves would start raping women, that the politicals would intervene, and that there would be a massacre. But once again the MVD psychologists were wrong! And we ourselves may well be surprised. All witnesses agree that the thieves behaved *like decent people,* but in our sense of the term, not in their own traditional sense. On their side, the politicals and the women themselves emphasized by their behavior that they regarded the thieves as friends, and trusted them. What lay below these attitudes need not concern us here. Perhaps the thieves kept remembering their comrades bloodily murdered that first Sunday.

5. After the mutiny the bosses had the effrontery to carry out a general medical examination of all the women. When they discovered that many were still virgins they were flabbergasted. Eh? What were you thinking of? All those days together! . . . In their judgment of events they could not rise above their own moral plane.

If we can speak of the strength of the Kengir revolt at all, its strength was in this unity.

Nor did the thieves touch the food stores, which, for those who know them, is no less surprising. Although there was enough food for many months in the storerooms, the Commission, after due consideration, decided to leave the allowances of bread and other foodstuffs as before. The honest citizen's fear of eating more than his share of public victuals, and having to answer for this waste! As though the state owed the prisoners nothing for all those hungry years! On the other hand (as Mikheyev recalls), when there was a shortage outside the camp, the supply section of the camp administration asked the prisoners to release certain foodstuffs. There was some fruit, intended for those on higher norms (free workers!), and the zeks released it.

The camp bookkeepers allocated foodstuffs on the old norms, the kitchen took them and cooked them, but in the new revolutionary atmosphere did not pilfer, nor did emissaries from the thieves appear with instructions to *bring the stuff for the people.* Nothing extra was ladled out for the trusties. And it was suddenly found that though the norms were the same, there was noticeably more to eat!

If the thieves sold things (things previously stolen in other places), they did not, as had been their custom, immediately come along to take them back again. "Things are different now," they said.

The stalls belonging to the local Workers' Supply Department went on trading inside the camp. The staff guaranteed the safety of the cashier (a free woman). She was allowed into the camp and went around the stalls with two girls, collecting the takings (in vouchers) from the salespeople. (But the vouchers, of course, soon ran out, and the bosses did not let new stocks through into the camp.)

The supply of three items needed in the camp remained in the hands of the bosses: electricity, water, and medicines. They did not, of course, control the air supply. As for medicines, they gave the camp not a single powder nor a single drop of iodine in forty days. The electricity they cut off after two or three days. The water supply they left alone.

The Technical Department began a fight for light. Their first idea was to fix hooks to fine wires and sling them forcibly over the outside cable, which ran just beyond the camp wall—and

in this way they stole current for a few days, until the tentacles were discovered and cut. This had given the Technical Department time to try out a windmill, abandon it, and begin installing in the service yard (in a spot concealed from prying eyes on the towers, or low-flying observation planes) a hydroelectric station, worked by . . . a water tap. A motor which happened to be in the yard was converted into a generator, and they started supplying the camp telephone network, the lighting in staff headquarters, and . . . the radio transmitter! (The huts were lit by wood splints.) This unique hydroelectric station went on working till the last day of the revolt.

In the very early days of the mutiny, the generals would come into the camp as though they owned it. True, Kuznetsov was not at a loss. When the first parleys took place he ordered his men to bring the bodies from the morgue and loudly ordered: "Caps off!" The zeks bared their heads, and the generals, too, had to take off their peaked caps in the presence of their victims. But the initiative remained with Gulag's General Bochkov. After approving the election of a commission ("You can't talk to everybody at once"), he demanded that the negotiators tell him first how their *cases* had been investigated (and Kuznetsov began lengthily and perhaps eagerly presenting his story); and further insisted that prisoners should stand up to speak. When somebody said, "The prisoners demand . . ." Bochkov touchily retorted that "Prisoners cannot demand, they can only request!" And "The prisoners request" became the established formula.

Bochkov replied to the prisoners' *requests* with a lecture on the building of socialism, the unprecedentedly rapid progress of the economy, and the successes of the Chinese revolution. That complacent irrelevancy, that driving of screws into the brain which always leaves us weak and numb. He had come into the camp to look for evidence that the use of firearms had been justified. (They would shortly declare that in fact there had been no shooting in the camp: this was just a lie told by the gangsters; nor had there been any beatings.) He was simply amazed that they should dare ask him to infringe the "instruction concerning the separate housing of men and women prisoners." (They talk this way about their instructions, as though they were laws for and from all time.)

Shortly, other, more important generals arrived in Douglas aircraft: Dolgikh (at that time allegedly head of Gulag) and Yegorov (Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs for the U.S.S.R.).

A meeting was called in the mess hall, and some two thousand prisoners assembled. Kuznetsov gave the orders: "Silence, please! All stand! Atten-tion!" and respectfully invited the generals to sit on the dais, while he, as befitted his subordinate rank, stood to one side! (Sluchenkov behaved differently. When one of the generals casually spoke of *enemies* present, Sluchenkov answered in a clear voice: "How many of your sort turned out to be enemies? Yagoda was a public enemy, Yezhov was a public enemy, Abakumov was a public enemy, Beria was a public enemy. How do we know that Kruglov is any better?")

Makeyev, to judge from his notes, drew up a draft agreement in which the authorities promised not to transfer people to other camps, or otherwise victimize them, and to begin a thorough investigation, while the zeks in return agreed to return to work immediately. However, when he and his supporters started going around the huts and asking prisoners to accept his draft, they were jeered at as "bald-headed Komsomols," "procurement agents," and "lackeys of the Cheka." They got a particularly hostile reception in the women's camp, and found that the separation of the men's and women's divisions was by now the last thing the zeks would agree to. (Makeyev angrily answered his opponents: "Just because you've had your hand on some wench's tits, d'you think the Soviet regime is a thing of the past? The Soviet regime will get its own way, whatever happens!")

The days ran on. They never took their eyes off the camp grounds— soldiers' eyes from the towers, and warders' eyes, too (the warders, knowing the zeks by sight, were supposed to identify them and remember who did what), and even the eyes of airmen (perhaps equipped with cameras)—and the generals were regretfully forced to conclude that there were no massacres, no pogroms, no violence in there, that the camp was not disintegrating of its own accord, and that there was no excuse to send troops in to the rescue.

The camp *stood fast* and the negotiations changed their character. Golden-epauleted personages, in various combinations, continued coming into the camp to argue and persuade. They were all allowed in, but they had to pick up white flags, and between the outer gate of the service yard (now the main entrance) and the barricade, they had to undergo a body search, with some Ukrainian girl slapping the generals' pockets in case there was a pistol

or a hand grenade in them. In return, the rebel staff *guaranteed* their personal safety! . . .

They showed the generals around, wherever it was allowed (not, of course, around the *secret* sector of the service yard), let them talk to prisoners, and called big meetings in the Camp Divisions for their benefit. Their epaulets flashing, the bosses took their seats in the presidium as of old, as though nothing were amiss.

The prisoners put up speakers. But speaking was so difficult! Not only because each of them, as he spoke, was writing his future sentence, but also because in their experience of life and their ideas of truth, the grays and the blues had grown too far apart, and there was hardly any way of penetrating, of letting some light into, those plump and prosperous carcasses, those glossy, melon-shaped heads. They seem to have been greatly angered by an old Leningrad worker, a Communist who had taken part in the Revolution. He asked them what chance Communism had when officers got fat on the output of camp workshops, when they had lead stolen from the separating plant and made into shot for their poaching trips; when prisoners had to dig their kitchen gardens for them; when carpets were laid in the bathhouse for the camp commander's visits, and an orchestra accompanied his ablutions.

To cut out some of this disorganized shouting, the discussions sometimes took the form of direct negotiations on the loftiest diplomatic model. Sometime in June a long mess table was placed in the women's camp, and the golden epaulets seated themselves on a bench to one side of it, while the Tommy-gunners allowed in with them as a bodyguard stood at their backs. Across the table sat the members of the Commission, and they, too, had a bodyguard—which stood there, looking very serious, armed with sabers, pikes, and slingshots. In the background crowds of prisoners gathered to listen to the powwow and shout comments. (Refreshments for the guests were not forgotten! Fresh cucumbers were brought from the hothouses in the service yard, and kvass from the kitchen. The golden epaulets crunched cucumbers unselfconsciously. . . .)

The rebels had agreed on their demands (or requests) in the first two days, and now repeated them over and over again:

- Punish the Evangelist's murderer.
- Punish all those responsible for the murders on Sunday night in the service yard.
- Punish those who beat up the women.
- Bring back those comrades who had been illegally sent to closed prisons for striking.
- No more number patches, window bars, or locks on hut doors.
- Inner walls between Camp Divisions not to be rebuilt.
- An eight-hour day, as for free workers.
- An increase in payment for work (here there was no question of equality with free workers).
- Unrestricted correspondence with relatives, periodic visits.
- Review of cases.

Although there was nothing unconstitutional in any of these demands, nothing that threatened the foundations of the state (indeed, many of them were requests for a return to the old position), it was impossible for the bosses to accept even the least of them, because these bald skulls under service caps and supported by close-clipped fat necks had forgotten how to admit a mistake or a fault. Truth was unrecognizable and repulsive to them if it manifested itself not in secret instructions from higher authority but on the lips of common people.

Still, the obduracy of the eight thousand under siege was a blot on the reputation of the generals, it might ruin their careers, and so they made promises. They promised that nearly all the demands would be satisfied—only, they said (to make it more convincing), they could hardly leave the women's camp open, that was against the rules (forgetting that in the Corrective Labor Camps it had been that way for twenty years), but they could consider arranging, should they say, *meeting days.* To the demand that the Commission of Inquiry (into the circumstances of the shooting) should start its work inside the camp, the generals unexpectedly agreed. (But Sluchenkov guessed their purpose, and refused to hear of it: while making their statements, the stoolies would expose everything that was happening in the camp.) Review of cases? Well, of course, cases would be re-examined, but prisoners would *have to be patient.* There was one thing that couldn't wait at all—the prisoners must get back to work! to work! to work!

But the zeks knew that trick by now: dividing them up into columns, forcing them to the ground at gunpoint, arresting the ringleaders.

No, they answered across the table, and from the platform. No! shouted voices from the crowd. The administration of Steplag have behaved like provocateurs! We do not trust the Steplag authorities! We don't trust the MVD!

"Don't trust *even* the MVD?" The vice-minister was thrown into a sweat by this treasonable talk. "And who can have inspired in you such hatred for the MVD?"

A riddle, if ever there was one.

"Send us a member of the Central Committee Presidium! A member of the Presidium! Then we'll believe you!" shouted the zeks.

"Be careful," the generals threatened. "You'll make it worse for yourselves!"

At this Kuznetsov got up. He spoke calmly and precisely, and he held himself proudly.

"If you enter the camp with weapons," he warned them, "don't forget that half of those here had a hand in the capture of Berlin. They can cope even with your weapons!"

Kapiton Kuznetsov! Some future historian of the Kengir mutiny must help us to understand the man better. What were his thoughts, how did he feel about his imprisonment? What stage did he imagine his appeal to have reached? How long was it since he had asked for a review, if the *order of release* (with rehabilitation, I believe) arrived from Moscow during the rebellion? His pride in keeping the mutinous camp in such good order—was it only the professional pride of a military man? Had he put himself at the head of the movement because it captured his imagination? (I reject that explanation.) Or, knowing his powers of leadership, had he taken over to restrain the movement, tame the flood, and channel it, to lay his chastened comrades at their masters' feet? (That is my view.) In meetings and discussions, and through people of lesser importance, he had opportunities to tell those in charge of the punitive operation anything he liked, and to hear things from them. On one occasion in June, for instance, the artful dodger Markosyan was sent out of camp on an errand for the Commission. Did Kuznetsov exploit such opportunities? Perhaps not. His position may have been a proud and independent one.

Two bodyguards—two enormous Ukrainian lads—accompanied Kuznetsov the whole time with knives in their belts.

To defend him? To settle scores?

(Makeyev claims that during the rebellion Kuznetsov also had a temporary wife—another Ukrainian nationalist.)

Gleb Sluchenkov was about thirty. Which means that he must have been captured by the Germans when he was nineteen or so. Like Kuznetsov, he now went around in his old uniform, which had been kept in storage, acting or overacting the old soldier. He had a slight limp, but the speed of his movements made it unimportant.

In the negotiations he was precise to the point of curtness. The authorities had the idea of calling all "former juvenile offenders" out of the camp (youngsters jailed before they were eighteen, some of them now twenty or twenty-one) and releasing them. This may not have been a trick—at about this time they were releasing such prisoners or reducing their sentences all over the country. Sluchenkov's answer was:

"Have you asked the minors whether they *want* to move from one camp to another, and leave their comrades in the lurch?" (In the Commission, too, he insisted that "These kids carry out our guard duties—we can't hand them over!" This, indeed, was the unspoken reason why the generals wanted to release these youngsters while Kengir was in revolt: and for all we know, they would have shoved them in cells outside the camp.) The law-abiding Makeyev nonetheless began rounding up former juveniles for the "discharge tribunal," and he testifies that out of 409 persons with a claim to be released, he only succeeded in collecting thirteen who were willing to leave. If we bear in mind Makeyev's sympathy with the authorities, and his hostility to the rising, his testimony is amazing: four hundred youngsters in the bloom of youth, and in their great majority not politically minded, renounced not merely freedom but salvation! And stayed with the doomed revolt . . .

Sluchenkov's reply to threats that troops would be used to put down the revolt was "Send them in! Send as many Tommy-gunners as you like! We'll throw ground glass in their eyes and take their guns from them! We'll trounce your Kengir troops. Your bowlegged officers we'll chase all the way to Karaganda—we'll ride into Karaganda on your backs! And once there, we're among friends!"

There is other evidence about him which seems reliable. "Any-

body who runs away will get this in the chest!"—flourishing a hunting knife in the air. "Anybody who doesn't turn out to defend the camp will get the knife," he announced in one hut. The inevitable logic of any military authority and any war situation.

The newborn camp government, like all governments through the ages, was incapable of existing without a security service, and Sluchenkov headed this (occupying the security officer's room in the women's camp). Since there could be no victory over the outside forces, Sluchenkov realized that this post meant certain execution. In the course of the revolt he told people in the camp that the bosses had secretly urged him to provoke a racial bloodbath (the golden epaulets were banking heavily on this) and so provide a plausible excuse for troops to enter the camp. In return the bosses promised Sluchenkov his life. He rejected their proposal. (What approaches were made to others? They haven't told us.) Moreover, when a rumor went around the camp that a Jewish pogrom was imminent, Sluchenkov gave warning that the rumormongers would be publicly flogged. The rumor died down.

A clash between Sluchenkov and the loyalists seemed inevitable. And it happened. It should be said that all these years, in all the Special Camps, orthodox Soviet citizens, without even consulting each other, unanimously condemned the massacre of the stoolies, or any attempt by prisoners to fight for their rights. We need not put this down to sordid motives (though quite a few of the orthodox were compromised by their work for the godfather) since we can fully explain it by their theoretical views. They accepted all forms of repression and extermination, even wholesale, provided they came *from above*—as a manifestation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Even impulsive and uncoordinated actions of the same kind but *from below* were regarded as *banditry,* and what is more, in its "Banderist" form (among the loyalists you would never get one to admit the right of the Ukraine to secede, because to do so was bourgeois nationalism). The refusal of the *katorzhane* to be slave laborers, their indignation about window bars and shootings, depressed and frightened the docile camp Communists.

In Kengir as elsewhere, there was a nest of loyalists. (Genkin, Apfelzweig, Talalayevsky, and evidently Akoyev. We have no more names.) There was also a malingerer who spent years in the hospital pretending that "his leg kept going around." Intellectual methods of struggle such as this were deemed permissible. In the

Commission itself Makeyev was an obvious example. All of them were reproachful from the beginning: "You shouldn't have started it"; when the passages under the walls were blocked off, they said that they shouldn't have tunneled; it was all a stunt thought up by the Banderist scum, and the thing to do now was to back down quickly. (Anyway, the sixteen killed were not from their camp, and it was simply silly to shed tears over the Evangelist.) All their bile and bigotry is blurted out in Makeyev's notes. Everything and everybody in sight is bad, and there are dangers on every hand; it's either a new sentence from the bosses, or a knife in the back from the Banderists. "They want to frighten us all with their bits of iron and drive us to our deaths." Makeyev angrily calls the Kengir revolt a "bloody game," a "false trump," "amateur dramatics" on the part of the Banderists, and more often than any of these, "the wedding party." The hopes and aims of the leaders, as he sees them, were fornication, evasion of work, and putting off the day of reckoning. (That there was a reckoning to be paid, he tacitly assumes to be just.)

This very accurately expresses the attitude of the loyalists in the fifties to the freedom movement in the camps. Whereas Makeyev was very cautious, and was indeed among the leaders of the revolt, Talalayevsky poured out such complaints quite openly, and Sluchenkov's internal security service locked him in a cell in the Kengir jailhouse for agitation hostile to the rebels.

Yes, this really happened. The rebels who had liberated the jail now set up one of their own. The old, old ironical story. True, only four men were put inside for various reasons (usually for dealings with the bosses), and none of them was shot (instead, they were presented with the best of alibis for the authorities).

This incident apart, the jailhouse—a particularly gloomy old place, built in the thirties—was put on display to a wide public: it had windowless solitary-confinement cells, with nothing but a tiny skylight; legless beds, mere wooden boards on the cement floor, where it was still colder and damper than elsewhere in the cold cell; and beside each bed, which means down on the floor, a rough earthenware bowl like a dog dish.

To this place the Agitation Department organized sightseeing trips for their fellow prisoners who had never been inside and perhaps never would be. They also took there visiting generals (who were not greatly impressed). They even asked that sightseers from among the free inhabitants of the settlement be sent along:

with the prisoners absent, they could in any case do nothing at the work sites. The generals actually sent such a party—not, of course, ordinary workingmen, but hand-picked personnel who found nothing to excite indignation.

In reply, the authorities offered to arrange a prisoners' outing to Rudnik (Divisions 1 and 2 of Steplag), since according to camp rumors a revolt had broken out there, too. (Incidentally, for their own good reasons both slaves and slavemasters shunned the word "revolt," or still worse, "rising," replacing them with the bashful euphemism "horseplay.") The delegates went, and saw for themselves that all was as it had been, that prisoners were going to work.

Their hopes largely depended on strikes like their own spreading. Now the delegates returned with cause for despondency.

(The authorities, in fact, had taken them there only just in time. Rudnik was of course worked up. Prisoners had heard from free workers all sorts of facts and fantasies about the Kengir revolt. In the same month [June] it so happened that many appeals for judicial review were turned down simultaneously. Then some half-crazy lad was wounded in the prohibited area. And there, too, a strike started, the gates between Camp Divisions were knocked down, and prisoners poured out onto the central road. Machine guns appeared on the towers. Somebody hung up a placard with anti-Soviet slogans on it, and the rallying cry "Freedom or death!" But this was taken down and replaced by one with *legitimate* demands and an undertaking to make up for losses caused by the stoppage once the demands were satisfied. Lorries came to fetch flour from the storerooms; the prisoners wouldn't let them have it. The strike lasted for something like a week, but we have no precise information about it: this is all at third hand, and probably exaggerated.)

There were weeks when the whole war became a war of propaganda. The outside radio was never silent: through several loudspeakers set up at intervals around the camp it interlarded appeals to the prisoners with information and misinformation, and with a couple of trite and boring records that frayed everybody's nerves.

> Through the meadow goes a maiden,
> She whose braided hair I love.

(Still, to be thought worthy even of that not very high honor—having records played to them—they had to rebel. Even rubbish

like that wasn't played for men on their knees.) These records also served, in the spirit of the times, as a *jamming device*—drowning the broadcasts from the camps intended for the escort troops.

On the outside radio they sometimes tried to blacken the whole movement, asserting that it had been started with the sole aim of rape and plunder. (In the camp itself the zeks just laughed, but the free inhabitants of the settlement also listened, willy-nilly, to the loudspeakers. Of course, the slavemasters could not rise to any other explanation—an admission that this rabble was capable of seeking justice was far beyond the reach of their minds.) At other times they tried telling filthy stories about members of the Commission. (They even said that one of the "old ones," when he was being transported by barge to the Kolyma, had made a hole below the waterline and sunk the boat with three hundred zeks in it. The emphasis was on the fact that it was poor zeks he had drowned, practically all of them 58's, too, and not the escort troops; how he had survived himself was not clear.) Or else they would taunt Kuznetsov, telling him that his discharge had arrived, but was now canceled. Then the appeals would begin again. Work! Work! Why should the Motherland keep you for nothing? By not going to work you are doing enormous damage to the state! (This was supposed to pierce the hearts of men doomed to eternal *katorga!*) Whole trainloads of coal are standing in the siding, there's nobody to unload it! (Let them stand there—the zeks laughed—you'll give way all the sooner! Yet it didn't occur even to them that the golden epaulets could unload it themselves if it troubled them so much.)

The Technical Department, however, gave as good as it got. Two portable film projectors were found in the service yard. Their amplifiers were used for loudspeakers, less powerful, of course, than those of the other side. They were fed from the secret hydroelectric station! (The fact that the camp had electricity and radio greatly surprised and troubled the bosses. They were afraid that the rebels might rig up a transmitter and start broadcasting news about their rising to foreign countries. Rumors to this effect were also put around inside the camp.)

The camp soon had its own announcers (Slava Yarimovskaya is one we know of). Programs included the latest news, and news features (there was also a daily wall newspaper, with cartoons). "Crocodile Tears" was the name of a program ridiculing the anxiety of the MVD men about the fate of women whom they themselves had previously beaten up. Then there were programs

for the escort troops. Apart from this, prisoners would approach the towers at night and shout to the soldiers through megaphones.

But there was not enough power to put on programs for the only potential sympathizers to be found in Kengir—the free inhabitants of the settlement, many of them exiles. It was they whom the settlement authorities were trying to fool, not by radio but, in some place which the prisoners could not reach, with rumors that bloodthirsty gangsters and insatiable prostitutes (this version went down well with the women)[6] were ruling the roost inside the camp; that over there innocent people were being tortured and burned alive in furnaces. (In that case, it was hard to see why the authorities did not intervene! . . .)

How could the prisoners call out through the walls, to the workers one, or two, or three kilometers away: "Brothers! We want only justice! They were murdering us for no crime of ours, they were treating us worse than dogs! Here are our demands"?

The thoughts of the Technical Department, since they had no chance to outstrip modern science, moved backward instead to the science of past ages. Using cigarette paper (there was everything you could think of in the service yard; we have talked about that already:[7] for many years it provided the Dzhezkazgan officers with their own Moscow tailor's shop, and a workshop for every imaginable article of consumer goods), they pasted together an enormous air balloon, following the example of the Montgolfier brothers. A bundle of leaflets was attached to the balloon, and slung underneath it was a brazier containing glowing coals, which sent a current of warm air into the dome of the balloon through an opening in its base. To the huge delight of the assembled crowd (if prisoners ever do feel happy they are like children), the marvelous aeronautical structure rose and was airborne. But alas! The speed of the wind was greater than the speed of its ascent, and as it was flying over the boundary fence the brazier caught on the barbed wire. The balloon, denied its current of warm air, fell and burned to ashes, together with the leaflets.

After this failure they started inflating balloons with smoke.

6. When it was all over and the women's column was marched through the settlement on the way to work, married women, Russian women, gathered along the roadside and shouted at them: "Prostitutes! Dirty whores! Couldn't do without it, could you . . . !" and other, still stronger remarks. The same thing happened next day, but the women prisoners had left the camp prepared, and replied to these insulting creatures with a bombardment of stones. The escort troops just laughed.

7. Part III, Chapter 22.

With a following wind they flew quite well, exhibiting inscriptions in large letters to the settlement:

"Save the women and old men from being beaten!"

"We demand to see a member of the Presidium."

The guards started shooting at these balloons.

Then some Chechen prisoners came to the Technical Department and offered to make kites. (They are experts.) They succeeded in sticking some kites together and paying out the string until they were over the settlement. There was a percussive device on the frame of each kite. When the kite was in a convenient position, the device scattered a bundle of leaflets, also attached to the kite. The kite fliers sat on the roof of a hut waiting to see what would happen next. If the leaflets fell close to the camp, warders ran to collect them; if they fell farther away, motorcyclists and horsemen dashed after them. Whatever happened, they tried to prevent the free citizens from reading an independent version of the truth. (The leaflets ended by requesting any citizen of Kengir who found one to deliver it to the Central Committee.)

The kites were also shot at, but holing was less damaging to them than to the balloons. The enemy soon discovered that sending up counter-kites to tangle strings with them was cheaper than keeping a crowd of warders on the run.

A war of kites in the second half of the twentieth century! And all to silence a word of truth.

(Perhaps it will help the reader to place the events at Kengir chronologically if we recall what was happening outside during the days of the mutiny. The Geneva Conference on Indochina was in session. The Stalin Peace Prize was conferred on Pierre Cot. Another progressive French man, the writer Sartre, arrived in Moscow to join in the life of our progressive society. The third centenary of the reunification of Russia and the Ukraine was loudly and lavishly celebrated.[8] On May 31 there was a solemn parade on Red Square. The Ukrainian S.S.R. and the Russian S.F.S.R. were awarded the Order of Lenin. On June 6 a monument to Yuri Dolgoruky was unveiled in Moscow. A Trade Union Congress opened on June 8 [but nothing was said there about Kengir]. On the tenth a new state loan was launched. The twentieth was Air Force Day, and there was a splendid parade at Tushino. These months of 1954 were also marked by a powerful

8. The Ukrainians at Kengir declared it a day of mourning.

offensive on the literary *front,* as people call it: Surkov, Kochetov, and Yermilov came out with very tough admonitory articles. Kochetov even asked: *"What sort of times are we living in?"* And nobody answered: *"A time of prison camp risings!"* Many *incorrect* plays and books were abused during this period. And in Guatemala the imperialistic United States met with the rebuff it deserved.)

There were Chechen exiles in the settlement, but it is unlikely that they made the other kites. You cannot accuse the Chechens of ever having served oppression. They understood perfectly the meaning of the Kengir revolt, and on one occasion brought a bakery van up to the gates. Needless to say, the soldiers drove them away.

(There is more than one side to the Chechens. People among whom they live—I speak from my experience in Kazakhstan—find them hard to get along with; they are rough and arrogant, and they do not conceal their dislike of Russians. But the men of Kengir only had to display independence and courage—and they immediately won the good will of the Chechens! When we feel that we are not sufficiently *respected,* we should ask ourselves whether we are living as we should.)

In the meantime the Technical Department was getting its notorious "secret" weapon ready. Let me describe it. Aluminum corner brackets for cattle troughs, produced in the workshops and awaiting dispatch, were packed with a mixture of sulfur scraped from matches and a little calcium carbide (every box of matches had been carried off to the room with the 100,000-volt door). When the sulfur was lit and the brackets thrown, they hissed and burst into little pieces.

But neither these star-crossed geniuses nor the field staff in the bathhouse were to choose the hour, place, and form of the decisive battle. Some two weeks after the beginning of the revolt, on one of those dark nights without a glimmer of light anywhere, thuds were heard at several places around the camp wall. This time it was not escaping prisoners or rebels battering it down; the wall was being demolished by the convoy troops themselves! There was commotion in the camp, as prisoners charged around with pikes and sabers, unable to make out what was happening and expecting an attack. But the troops did not take the offensive.

In the morning it turned out that the enemy without had made about a dozen breaches in the wall in addition to those already

there and the barricaded gateway. (Machine-gun posts had been set up on the other side of the gaps, to prevent the zeks from pouring through them.)[9] This was of course the preliminary for an assault through the breaches, and the camp was a seething anthill as it prepared to defend itself. The rebel staff decided to pull down the inner walls and the mud-brick outhouses and to erect a second circular wall of their own, specially reinforced with stacks of brick where it faced the gaps, to give protection against machine-gun bullets.

How things had changed! The troops were demolishing the boundary wall, the prisoners were rebuilding it, and the thieves were helping with a clear conscience, not feeling that they were contravening their *code.*

Additional defense posts now had to be established opposite the gaps, and every platoon assigned to a gap, which it must run to defend should the alarm be raised at night. Bangs on the buffer of a railroad car, and the usual whistles, were the agreed-upon alarm signals.

The zeks quite seriously prepared to advance against machine guns with pikes. Those who shied at the idea to begin with soon got used to it.

There was one attack in the daytime. Tommy-gunners were moved up to one of the gaps, opposite the balcony of the Steplag Administration Building, which was packed with important personages sheltering under broad army epaulets or the narrow ones of the Public Prosecutor's department, and holding cameras or even movie cameras. The soldiers were in no hurry. They merely advanced just far enough into the breach for the alarm to be given, whereupon the rebel platoons responsible for the defense of the breach rushed out to man the barricade—brandishing their pikes and holding stones and mud bricks—and then, from the balcony, movie cameras whirred and pocket cameras clicked (taking care to keep the Tommy-gunners out of the picture). Disciplinary officers, prosecutors, Party officials, and all the rest of them—Party members to a man, of course—laughed at the bizarre spectacle of the impassioned savages with pikes. Well-fed and shameless, these

9. The precedent is said to have been set by Norilsk; there, too, they made breaches in the wall, to lure out the fainthearted, who would be used to stir up the thieves, and so provide an excuse to introduce troops and restore order.

grand personages mocked their starved and cheated fellow citizens from the balcony, and found it *all very funny.*[10]

Then warders, too, stole up to the gaps and tried to slip nooses with hooks over the prisoners, as though they were hunting wild animals or the abominable snowman, hoping to drag out a *talker.*

But what they mainly counted on now were deserters, rebels with cold feet. The radio blared away. Come to your senses! Leave the camp through the gaps in the wall! At those points we shall not fire! Those who come over will not be tried for mutiny!

The Commission's response, over the camp radio, was this: Anybody who wants to run away can go right ahead, through the main gate if he likes; we are holding no one back!

One who did so was . . . a member of the Commission itself, former Major Makeyev, who walked up to the main guardhouse as though he had business there. (*As though,* not because they would have detained him, nor because they had the means of shooting him in the back—but because it is almost impossible to play the traitor with your comrades looking on and howling their contempt!)[11] For three weeks he had kept up a pretense; now at last he could give free rein to his defeatism, and his anger with the rebels for wanting the freedom which he, Makeyev, did not want. Now, working off his debts to the bosses, he broadcast an appeal to surrender, and reviled those who favored holding out longer. Here are some sentences from his own written account of this broadcast: "Somebody has decided that freedom can be won with the help of sabers and pikes. They want to expose to bullets people who won't take their bits of iron. . . . We have been promised a review of our cases. The generals are patiently negotiating with us, but Sluchenkov regards this as a sign of weakness on their part. The Commission is a screen for gangster debauchery. . . . Conduct the negotiations in a manner worthy of political prisoners, and do not (!!) prepare for senseless resistance."

The holes in the wall gaped for weeks; the wall had not remained whole so long while the revolt was on. And in all those weeks only about a dozen men fled from the camp.

10. These photographs must still exist somewhere, gummed to reports on the punitive operation. Perhaps somebody will not be swift enough to destroy them before posterity sees them.

11. Even ten years later he was so ashamed that in his memoirs, which were probably designed to serve as an apologia, he writes that he chanced to put his head out of the gate, where the other side pounced on him and tied his hands. . . .

Why? Surely the rest did not believe in victory. Were they not appalled by the thought of the punishment ahead? They were. Did they not want to save themselves for their families' sake? They did! They were torn, and thousands of them perhaps had secretly considered this possibility. The invitation to the former juveniles had a firm legal base. But the social temperature on this plot of land had risen so high that if souls were not transmuted, they were purged of dross, and the sordid laws saying that "we only live once," that being determines consciousness, and that every man's a coward when his neck is at stake, ceased to apply for that short time in that circumscribed place. The laws of survival and of reason told people that they must all surrender together or flee individually, but they did not surrender and they did not flee! They rose to that spiritual plane from which executioners are told: "The devil take you for his own! Torture us! Savage us!"

And the operation, so beautifully planned, to make the prisoners scatter like rats through the gaps in the wall till only the most stubborn were left, who would then be crushed—this operation collapsed because its inventors had the mentality of rats themselves.

In the rebel wall newspaper, next to a drawing of a woman showing a child a pair of handcuffs in a glass case—"like the ones they kept your father in"—appeared a cartoon of the "Last Renegade" (a black cat running through one of the holes in the wall).

Cartoonists can always laugh, but the people in the camp had little to laugh about. The second, third, fourth, fifth week went by. . . . Something which, according to the laws of Gulag, could not last an hour had lasted for an incredibly, indeed an agonizingly long time—half of May and almost the whole of June. At first people were intoxicated with the joy of victory, with freedom, meetings, and schemes, then they believed the rumors that Rudnik had risen; perhaps Churbay-Nura, Spassk—all Steplag would follow. In no time at all Karaganda would rise! The whole Archipelago would erupt and fall in ash over the face of the land! But Rudnik put its hands behind its back, lowered its head, and reported as before for its eleven-hour shifts, contracting silicosis, with never a thought for Kengir, or even for itself.

No one supported the island of Kengir. It was impossible by now to take off into the wilderness: the garrison was being steadily reinforced; troops were under canvas out on the steppe. The whole

camp had been encircled with a double barbed-wire fence outside the walls. There was only one rosy spot on the horizon: the lord and master (they were expecting Malenkov) was coming to dispense justice. He would come, kind man, and exclaim, and throw up his hands: "However could they live in such conditions? and why did you treat them like this? Put the murderers on trial! Shoot Chechev and Belyaev! Sack the rest. . . ." But it was too tiny a spot, and too rosy.

They could not hope for pardon. All they could do was live out their last few days of freedom, and submit to Steplag's vengeance.

There are always hearts which cannot stand the strain. Some were already morally crushed, and were in an agony of suspense for the crushing proper to begin. Some quietly calculated that they were not really involved, and need not be if they went on being careful. Some were newly married (what is more, with a proper religious ceremony—a Western Ukrainian girl, for instance, will not marry without one, and thanks to Gulag's thoughtfulness, there were priests of all religions there). For these newlyweds the bitter and the sweet succeeded each other with a rapidity which ordinary people never experience in their slow lives. They observed each day as their last, and retribution delayed was a gift from heaven each morning.

The believers . . . prayed, and leaving the outcome of the Kengir revolt in God's hands, were as always the calmest of people. Services for all religions were held in the mess hall according to a fixed timetable. The Jehovah's Witnesses felt free to observe their rules strictly and refused to build fortifications or stand guard. They sat for hours on end with their heads together, saying nothing. (They were made to wash the dishes.) A prophet, genuine or sham, went around the camp putting crosses on bunks and foretelling the end of the world. Conveniently for him, a severe cold spell set in, of the sort that a shift in the wind sometimes brings to Kazakhstan even in summer. The old women he had gathered together sat, not very warmly dressed, on the cold ground shivering and stretching out their hands to heaven. Where else could they turn?

Some knew that they were fatally compromised and that the few days before the troops arrived were all that was left of life. The theme of all their thoughts and actions must be how to hold out longer. These people were not the unhappiest. (The unhappiest were those who were not involved and who prayed for the end.)

But when all these people gathered at meetings to decide whether to surrender or to hold on, they found themselves again in that heated climate where their personal opinions dissolved, and ceased to exist even for themselves. Or else they feared ridicule even more than the death that awaited them.

"Comrades," the majestic Kuznetsov said confidently, as though he knew many secrets, and all to the advantage of the prisoners, "we have *defensive firepower,* and the enemy will suffer fifty percent of our own losses."

He also said: "Even our destruction will not be in vain."

(In this he was absolutely right. The social temperature had its effect on him, too.)

And when they voted for or against holding out, the majority were *for.*

Then Sluchenkov gave an ominous warning. "Just remember, if anyone remains in our ranks now and wants to surrender later, we shall settle accounts with him five minutes before he gets there!"

One day the outside radio broadcast an "order of the day to Gulag": for refusal to work, for sabotage, for this, that, and the other, the Kengir Camp Division of Steplag was to be disbanded and all prisoners sent to Magadan. (Clearly, the planet was getting too small for Gulag. And those who had been sent to Magadan previously—what were they there for?) One last chance to go back to work . . .

Once more their last chance ran out, and things were as before.

All was as it had been, and the dreamlike existence of these eight thousand men, suspended in midair, was rendered all the more startlingly improbable and strange by the regularity of the camp routine; fresh linen from the laundry; haircuts; clothes and shoes repaired. There were even conciliation courts for disputes. Even . . . even a release procedure!

Yes. The outside radio sometimes summoned prisoners due for release: these were either foreigners from some country which had earned the right to gather in its citizens, or else people whose sentence was (or was said to be?) nearing its end. Perhaps this was the administration's way of picking up "tongues" without the use of warders' ropes and hooks? The Commission sat on it, but had no means of verification, and let them all go.

Why did it drag on so long? What can the bosses have been waiting for? For the food to run out? They knew it would last a

long time. Were they considering opinion in the settlement? They had no need to. Were they carefully working out their plan of repression? They could have been quicker about it. (True, it was learned later that they had sent for a "special purposes"—meaning punitive—regiment from somewhere around Karaganda. It's a job not everyone can do.) Were they having to seek approval for the operation *up top?* How high up? There is no knowing on what date and at what level the decision was taken.

On several occasions the main gate of the service yard suddenly opened—perhaps to test the readiness of the defenders? The duty picket sounded the alarm, and the platoons poured out to meet the enemy. But no one entered the camp grounds.

The only field intelligence service the defenders had were the observers on the hut roofs. Their anticipations were based entirely on what the fence permitted them to see from the rooftops.

In the middle of June several tractors appeared in the settlement. They were working, shifting something perhaps, around the boundary fence. They began working even at night. These nocturnal tractor operations were baffling. Just in case, the prisoners started digging ditches opposite the gaps, as an additional defense. (They were all photographed or sketched from an observation plane.)

The unfriendly roar made the night seem blacker.

Then suddenly the skeptics were put to shame! And the defeatists! And all who had said that there would be no mercy, and that there was no point in begging. The orthodox alone could feel triumphant. On June 22 the outside radio announced that the prisoners' demands had been accepted! A member of the Presidium of the Central Committee was on his way!

The rosy spot turned into a rosy sun, a rosy sky! It is, then, possible to get through to them! There *is,* then, justice in our country! They will give a little, and we will give a little. If it comes to it, we can walk about with number patches, and the bars on the windows needn't bother us, we aren't thinking of climbing out. You say they're tricking us again? Well, they aren't asking us to report for work *beforehand!*

Just as the touch of a stick will draw off the charge from an electroscope so that the agitated gold leaf sinks gratefully to rest, so did the radio announcement reduce the brooding tension of that last week.

Even the loathsome tractors, after working for a while on the

evening of June 24, stopped their noise.

Prisoners could sleep peacefully on the fortieth night of the revolt. *He* would probably arrive tomorrow; perhaps he had come already. . . .[12] Those short June nights are too short to have your sleep out, and you are fast asleep at dawn. It was like that summer thirteen years before.*

In the early dawn of Friday, June 25, parachutes carrying flares opened out in the sky, more flares soared from the watchtowers, and the observers on the rooftops were picked off by snipers' bullets before they could let out a squeak! Then cannon fire was heard! Airplanes skimmed the camp, spreading panic. Tanks, the famous T-34's, had taken up position under cover of the tractor noise and now moved on the gaps from all sides. (One of them, however, fell into a ditch.) Some of the tanks dragged concatenations of barbed wire on trestles so that they could divide up the camp grounds immediately. Behind others ran helmeted assault troops with Tommy guns. (Both Tommy-gunners and tank crews had been given vodka first. However *special* the troops may be, it is easier to destroy unarmed and sleeping people with drink inside you.) Operators with walkie-talkies came in with the advancing troops. The generals went up into the towers with the snipers, and from there, in the daylight shed by the flares (and the light from a tower set on fire by the zeks with their incendiary bombs), gave their orders: "Take hut number so-and-so! . . . That's where Kuznetsov is!" They did not hide in observation posts, as they usually do, because no bullets threatened them.[13]

From a distance, from their building sites, free workers watched the operation.

The camp woke up—frightened out of its wits. Some stayed where they were in their huts, lying on the floor as their one chance of survival, and because resistance seemed senseless. Others tried to make them get up and join in the resistance. Yet others ran right into the line of fire, either to fight or to seek a quicker death.

The Third Camp Division fought—the division which had

12. Perhaps he really had come? Perhaps it was he who had given the instructions?

13. They only hid from history. Who were these war lords, so swift and so sure? Why has our country not saluted their glorious victory at Kengir? With some difficulty we can discover the names not of the most important there, but of some by no means unimportant: for instance, Colonel Ryazantsev, head of the Security Operations Section; Syomushkin, head of the Political Department of Steplag. . . . Please help! Add to the list.

started it all. (It consisted mainly of 58's with a large majority of Banderists.) They hurled stones at the Tommy-gunners and warders, and probably sulfur bombs at the tanks. . . . Nobody thought of the powdered glass. One hut counterattacked twice, with shouts of "Hurrah."

The tanks crushed everyone in their way. (Alla Presman, from Kiev, was run over—the tracks passed over her abdomen.) Tanks rode up onto the porches of huts and crushed people there (including two Estonian women, Ingrid Kivi and Makhlapa.)[14] The tanks grazed the sides of huts and crushed those who were clinging to them to escape the caterpillar tracks. Semyon Rak and his girl threw themselves under a tank clasped in each other's arms and ended it that way. Tanks nosed into the thin board walls of the huts and even fired blank shells into them. Faina Epstein remembers the corner of a hut collapsing, as if in a nightmare, and a tank passing obliquely over the wreckage and over living bodies; women tried to jump and fling themselves out of the way: behind the tank came a lorry, and the half-naked women were tossed onto it.

The cannon shots were blank, but the Tommy guns were shooting live rounds, and the bayonets were cold steel. Women tried to shield men with their own bodies—and they, too, were bayoneted! Security Officer Belyaev shot two dozen people with his own hand that morning; when the battle was over he was seen putting knives into the hands of corpses for the photographer to take pictures of dead *gangsters.* Suprun, a member of the Commission, and a grandmother, died from a wound in her lung. Some prisoners hid in the latrines, and were riddled with bullets there.[15]

Kuznetsov was arrested in the bathhouse, his command post, and made to kneel. Sluchenkov was lifted high in the air with his hands tied behind his back and dashed to the ground (a favorite trick with the thieves).

Then the sound of shooting died away. There were shouts of "Come out of your huts; we won't shoot." Nor did they—they merely beat prisoners with their gun butts.

As groups of prisoners were taken, they were marched through

14. In one of the tanks sat Nagibina, the camp doctor, drunk. She was there not to help but to watch—it was interesting.

15. Attention, Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre, with your War Crimes Tribunal! Attention, philosophers. Here's material for you! Why not hold a session? They can't hear me. . . .

the gaps onto the steppe and between files of Kengir convoy troops outside. They were searched and made to lie flat on their faces with their arms stretched straight out. As they lay there thus crucified, MVD fliers and warders walked among them to identify and pull out those whom they had spotted earlier from the air or from the watchtowers. (So busy were they with all this that no one had leisure to open *Pravda* that day. It had a special theme—a day in the life of our Motherland: the successes of steelworkers; more and more crops harvested by machine. The historian surveying our country as it was *that day* will have an easy task.)

Curious officers could now inspect the secrets of the service yard —see where the electric power had come from, and what "secret weapons" there were.

The victorious generals descended from the towers and went off to breakfast. Without knowing any of them, I feel confident that their appetite that June morning left nothing to be desired and that they drank deeply. An alcoholic hum would not in the least disturb the ideological harmony in their heads. And what they had for hearts was something installed with a screwdriver.

The number of those killed or wounded was about six hundred, according to the stories, but according to figures given by the Kengir Division's Production Planning Section, which became known some months later, it was more than *seven hundred.*[16] When they had crammed the camp hospital with wounded, they began taking them into town. (The free workers were informed that the troops had fired only blanks, and that prisoners had been killing each other.)

It was tempting to make the survivors dig the graves, but to prevent the story from spreading too far, this was done by troops. They buried three hundred in a corner of the camp, and the rest somewhere out on the steppe.

All day on June 25, the prisoners lay face down on the steppe in the sun (for days on end the heat had been unmerciful), while in the camp there was endless searching and breaking open and shaking out. Later bread and water were brought out onto the steppe. The officers had lists ready. They called the roll, put a tick by those who were still alive, gave them

16. On January 9, 1905, the number killed was about 100. In 1912, in the famous massacre on the Lena goldfields, which shocked all Russia, there were 270 killed and 250 wounded.

their bread ration, and consulting their lists, at once divided the prisoners into groups.

The members of the Commission and other suspects were locked up in the camp jail, which was no longer needed for sightseers. More than a thousand people were selected for dispatch either to closed prisons or to Kolyma (as always, these lists were drawn up partly by guesswork, so that many who had not been involved at all found their way into them).

May this picture of the pacification bring peace to the souls of those on whom the last chapters have grated. Hands off, keep away! No one will have to take refuge in the "safe deposit," and the punitive squads will never face retribution!

On June 26, the prisoners were made to spend the whole day taking down the barricades and bricking in the gaps.

On June 27, they were marched out to work. Those trains in the sidings would wait no longer for working hands!

The tanks which had crushed Kengir traveled under their own power to Rudnik and crawled around for the zeks to see. And draw their conclusions . . .

The trial of the rebel leaders took place in autumn, 1955, in camera, of course, and indeed we know nothing much about it. . . . Kuznetsov, they say, was very sure of himself, and tried to prove that he had behaved impeccably and could have done no better. We do not know what sentences were passed. Sluchenkov, Mikhail Keller, and Knopkus were probably shot. I say probably because they certainly would have been shot earlier—but perhaps 1955 softened their fate?

Back in Kengir all was made ready for a life of honest toil. The bosses did not fail to create teams of *shock workers* from among yesterday's rebels. The "self-financing" system flourished. Food stalls were busy, rubbishy films were shown. Warders and officers again sneaked into the service yard to have things made privately —a fishing reel, a money box—or to get the clasp mended on a lady's handbag. The rebel shoemakers and tailors (Lithuanians and Western Ukrainians) made light, elegant boots for the bosses, and dresses for their wives. As of old, the zeks at the separating plant were ordered to strip lead from the cables and bring it back to the camp to be melted down for shot, so that the comrade officers could go hunting antelopes.

By now disarray had spread throughout the Archipelago and reached Kengir. Bars were not put back at the windows, huts were

no longer locked. The "two-thirds" parole system was introduced, and there was even a quite unprecedented re-registration of 58's —the half-dead were released.

The grass on graves is usually very thick and green.

In 1956 the camp area itself was liquidated. Local residents, exiles who had stayed on in Kengir, discovered where *they* were buried—and brought steppe tulips to put on their graves.

Whenever you pass the Dolgoruky monument, remember that it was unveiled during the Kengir revolt—and so has come to be in some sense a memorial to Kengir.

END OF PART V

PART VI

Exile

■

Chapter 1

■

Exile in the First Years of Freedom

Humanity probably invented exile first and prison later. Expulsion from the tribe was of course exile. We were quick to realize how difficult it is for a man to exist, divorced from his own place, his familiar environment. Everything is wrong and awkward, everything is temporary and unreal, even if there are green woods around, not permafrost.

In the Russian Empire as elsewhere they were not slow to discover exile. It was given legal sanction under Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich by the Code of Laws of 1648. But even earlier, at the end of the sixteenth century, people were exiled without legal sanction: the disgraced people of Kargopol, for instance, then those inhabitants of Uglich who had witnessed the murder of the Tsarevich Dmitri. Our great spaces gave their blessing—Siberia was ours already. By 1645 the number of exiles there had reached one and a half thousand. Peter exiled many hundreds at a time. As we have already said, Elizabeth replaced the death penalty by perpetual exile to Siberia. At this point the term was debased: exile came to mean not only free settlement but also *katorga,* which was a very different matter. Alexander's Regulations on Exiles in 1822 gave legal status to this misuse. For this reason the figures for exiles in the nineteenth century must obviously be taken to include convicts sentenced to hard labor. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, between two thousand and six thousand people were exiled year in and year out. From 1820 they also started exiling vagrants (the "parasites," in our terminology), so that in some years they weeded out as many as ten thousand. In 1863 the

desert island of Sakhalin, so conveniently cut off from the mainland, found favor and was equipped as a place of exile, so that the resources of the system were still further enlarged. Altogether in the course of the nineteenth century *half a million* were exiled, and at the end of the century those in exile at any one time numbered 300,000.[1]

By the end of the century the ramifications of the exile system were becoming more and more diverse. Milder forms also appeared: "banishment to a distance of two provinces," and even "banishment abroad"[2] (not then considered such a ruthless punishment as after October). *Administrative* banishment, which usefully supplemented banishment by the courts, also took root. However: the term of banishment was expressed in clear and precise figures, and even exile for life was not in reality a life sentence. Chekhov writes in *Sakhalin* that after ten years in exile (or six years, if his "conduct had been completely satisfactory"—a vague criterion, but according to Chekhov one widely applied), the exile was re-registered as a peasant and could go back to any part of the country he wished except his native place.

A feature of the exile system in the Tsarist nineteenth century which was taken for granted and seemed natural to everyone, but to us now seems surprising, was that it concerned itself only with individuals: whether he was dealt with by the courts or administratively, each man was sentenced separately and not as a member of some group.

The conditions of life in exile, the degree of harshness, changed from one decade to the next, and different generations of exiles have left us a variety of evidence. Transported prisoners traveling from transit prison to transit prison had a hard time of it; but we learn from P. F. Yakubovich and from Lev Tolstoi that politicals were transported in quite tolerable conditions. F. Kon adds that in the presence of politicals escort troops treated *even* common criminals well, and that the criminals therefore thought highly of politicals. For many generations the population of Siberia was

1. All this information is taken from Volume XVI ("Western Siberia") of Semyonov-Tyan-Shansky's multivolume geographical study, *Russia*. Not only the celebrated geographer himself, but his brothers, too, were staunch and selfless liberals in their public life, who did a great deal to spread the light of freedom in our land. During the Revolution their whole family was destroyed. One brother was shot on their comfortable estate on the river Ranov, the house was burned and the great orchard, together with the avenues of limes and poplars, chopped down.

2. P. F. Yakubovich, *V Mire Otverzhennykh (In the World of Outcasts)*.

hostile to exiles: they were assigned the poorest plots of land, they were left with the worst and poorest-paid jobs, and peasants would not let their daughters marry such people. Unprovided for, ill clad, branded, and hungry, they formed gangs and lived by stealing—further exacerbating the local inhabitants. None of this, however, applies to the politicals, who became a significant stream from the seventies. F. Kon again writes that the Yakuts received the politicals amicably and hopefully, looking to them as doctors, teachers, and legal advisers in their struggles with authority. The conditions in which political exiles lived were certainly such that many scholars (scholars who only began their studies in exile) sprang from their ranks—experts on particular regions, ethnographers, philologists,[3] scientists, as well as publicists and writers. Chekhov did not see the politicals on Sakhalin and has left us no description of them,[4] but F. Kon, for instance, when he was exiled to Irkutsk, began working on the progressive newspaper *Vostochnoye Obozrenie (Eastern Review),* to which Populists, supporters of the People's Will Party, and Marxists (Krasin) all contributed. This was no ordinary Siberian town but a major provincial capital, to which, according to the Regulations on Exiles, politicals were not supposed to be sent at all—in spite of which they were to be found working in banks and commercial firms, teaching, rubbing shoulders with the local intelligentsia at receptions. And exiles contrived to get into the Omsk newspaper *Stepnoi Krai* articles the likes of which the censorship would never have let through anywhere in Russia proper. The Omsk exiles even supplied the Zlatoust strikers with their newspaper. Through the efforts of the exiles Krasnoyarsk, too, became a radical town. While in Minusinsk, exile activists grouped around the Martyanov Museum enjoyed such respect and such freedom from administrative interference that they not only created without hindrance a network of hideouts and transit points for fugitives (we have previously described how easy it was to escape in those days), but even controlled the proceedings of the "Witte" committee* in the

3. Tan-Bogoraz, V. I. Jochelson, L. Y. Shternberg.

4. In his innocence of legal matters, or perhaps simply in the spirit of his day, Chekhov did not obtain any formal authorization, or any official piece of paper, for his journey to Sakhalin. Nonetheless he was allowed to make a census of the convicts and even given access to prison documents. (Compare that with our experience! Try going to inspect a nest of camps without authorization from the NKVD!) The one restriction was that he could not meet the politicals.

town.[5] And if Chekhov exclaims that the regime for criminals in Sakhalin had been simplified "in the most mean and stupid fashion" until it was in fact "serfdom," this cannot be said of political exile from early times and until the end of the Tsarist period. By the beginning of the twentieth century administrative exile for political offenders in Russia had ceased to be a punishment and become a meaningless, purely formal "antiquated device which has proved its ineffectuality" (Guchkov). In 1906 Stolypin began taking steps to abolish it altogether.

What did exile mean to Radishchev? In the Ust-Ilimsky Ostrov settlement he bought a two-story wooden house (for ten rubles, incidentally), and lived there with his young children and a sister-in-law who took the place of his wife. Nobody even thought of making him *work;* he spent his time in any way he saw fit and he was free to move about anywhere within the Ust-Ilim administrative region. What Pushkin's banishment to Mikhailovskoye meant, the very many people who have been there as sightseers can imagine for themselves. The life in exile of many other writers and public figures was similar—that of Turgenev at Spasskoye-Lutovinovo, that of Aksakov at Varvarino (his own choice). Trubetskoi even had his wife living with him in his cell in Nerchinsk Prison (where a son was born to them), and when after some years he was transferred to Irkutsk as an exile they had a huge house of their own, their own carriage, footmen, French tutors for the children. (Legal thought was still immature and knew nothing of "enemies of the people" or "confiscation of all property.") Herzen, exiled to Novgorod, held a position in the guberniya in which he received reports from the police chief.

This mild treatment of exiles was not confined to socially distinguished or famous people. In the twentieth century, too, it was enjoyed by many revolutionaries and frondeurs—by the Bolsheviks in particular, who were not thought dangerous. Stalin, with four escapes behind him, was exiled for a fifth time . . . all the way to Vologda. Vadim Podbelsky was banished for his outspoken articles against the government . . . from Tambov to Saratov! What cruelty! Needless to say, nobody tried to drive him out to forced labor when he got there.[6]

5. Feliks Kon, *Za Pyat'desyat Let.* Tom 2. *Na Poselenii. (Fifty Years.* Vol. 2. *Banishment.)*

6. This revolutionary, after whom the Post Office Street in many a Russian town was

Yet exile even under these conditions, lenient as it seems to us, exile with no danger of starving to death, was sometimes taken hard by the exile himself. Many revolutionaries recall how painful they found the move from prison, where they were assured of bread, warmth, shelter, and leisure for their "universities" and their party wrangles, to a place of exile, where you were all by yourself among strangers, and had to use your own ingenuity to find food and shelter. Where there was no need to worry about these things it was, so we are informed (by F. Kon, for instance), still worse: "the horrors of idleness . . . The most dreadful thing of all is that people are condemned to inactivity." Indeed, some of them even abandoned study for moneymaking, for trade, and some simply despaired and took to drink.

But what made this inactivity possible? The local inhabitants, after all, did not complain of it; they were lucky if they managed to straighten their backs for the evening. So that putting it more precisely, what the exiles suffered from was change of place, the disruption of their accustomed way of life, the tearing up of roots, the severing of links with other living beings.

The journalist Nikolai Nadezhdin needed only two years of exile to lose his taste for libertarianism and change into an honest servant of the throne. The wild rake Menshikov, exiled to Beryozov in 1727, built a church there, discoursed with the local inhabitants on the vanity of this world, grew a long beard, went around in a peasant smock, and died within two years. What, we may wonder, did Radishchev find so intolerable, so soul-destroying in his comfortable place of exile? Yet when, back in Russia, he was threatened with a second term, he was so terrified that he committed suicide. Pushkin, again, wrote to Zhukovsky from the village of Mikhailovskoye, that earthly paradise in which a man might pray to live forever: "Rescue me [i.e., from banishment—A.S.] even if it means the fortress or the monastery at Solovki!" Nor was this mere talk, because he wrote to the governor also, begging that his exile be commuted to imprisonment.

We who have learned what Solovki is like may now find it incomprehensible: what eccentric impulse, what combination of despair and naïveté, could make the persecuted poet give up Mikhailovskoye and ask to go to the isles of Solovki? . . .

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renamed, had evidently never acquired the habit of work—so much so that he blistered his hands taking part in the first *subbotnik** and . . . died from the infection.

Here we see that the threat of exile—of mere displacement, of being set down with your feet tied—has a somber power of its own, the power which even ancient potentates understood, and which Ovid long ago experienced.

Emptiness. Helplessness. A life that is no life at all. . . .

■

In the inventory of instruments of oppression which the glorious revolution was to sweep away forever, exile was also of course to be found, somewhere around fourth place.

But the revolution had scarcely taken its first steps on legs still infirm, it was still in its infancy, when it realized that exile was indispensable. Exile did not exist in Russia for a year or so, perhaps three years. But very shortly what are now called deportations began—the export of undesirables. Let me quote verbatim the words of a national hero, later a Marshal of the Soviet Union, about the year 1921 in the province of Tambov. "It was decided to organize large-scale deportation of the families of bandits [i.e., "partisans"—A.S.]. Extensive *concentration camps* were organized, in which these families could be confined while waiting." [My emphasis—A.S.][7]

Only the fact that it was so convenient to shoot people on the spot rather than carry them elsewhere, guard them and feed them on the way, resettle them and go on guarding them—only this delayed the introduction of a regular exile system until the end of War Communism.* Soon after that, on October 16, 1922, a permanent Exile Commission was set up under the Commissariat of the Interior to deal with "socially dangerous persons and active members of anti-Soviet parties"—meaning all parties except the Bolsheviks—with a budgetary period of three years.[8] Thus even in the early twenties exile was a familiar and smoothly operating institution.

True, exile as a punishment for criminals was not revived: the Corrective Labor Camps had already been invented, and swallowed the lot. Political exile, on the other hand, became more

7. Tukhachevsky, "Borba s Kontrrevolyutsionnymi Vostaniyami" ("The Struggle Against Counter-Revolutionary Revolts"), in *Voina i Revolyutsiya (War and Revolution)*, 1926, No. 7/8, p. 10.

8. *Sobraniye Uzakonenii RSFSR (Collection of Decrees of the R.S.F.S.R.)*, 1922, No. 65, p. 844.

convenient than ever before: in the absence of opposition newspapers, banishment no longer received publicity, and for those who were near to the exiles or knew them closely, a three-year sentence of banishment passed neither in haste nor in anger looked like a sentimental educational measure after the shootings of War Communism.

However, people did not return to their native places from this almost apologetic prophylactic banishment, or if they did, they were quickly picked up again. Those drawn in began circling around the Archipelago, and the last broken arc invariably ended in a ditch.

Because people are so complacently gullible, the regime's intentions dawned on them slowly: the regime was simply not strong enough yet to eradicate all the unwanted at once. So for the time being they were uprooted not from life itself, but from the memory of their fellows.

What made it all the easier to re-establish the exile system was that the old transportation roads had not become blocked, or fallen in, while the places of exile in Siberia, around Archangel, around Vologda, had not changed in the slightest and were not a bit surprised. (Nor would statesmanlike thought stop there: someone's finger would slide over a map of a sixth part of the earth's land surface, and spacious Kazakhstan, the moment it adhered to the Union of Republics, would fit neatly into the exile system with its great expanses, while even in Siberia itself many suitably God-forsaken places awaited discovery.)

There was, however, in the exile system one residual snag: the parasitical attitude of the exiles, who thought the state had an obligation to feed them. The Tsarist government did not dare to try compelling the exiles to increase the national product. And professional revolutionaries considered it beneath them to work. In Yakutya an exile settler had the right to 15 desyatins of land (65 times as much as a kolkhoznik now). If the revolutionaries did not fling themselves into the task of cultivation, the Yakuts were very attached to the land and "bought them off," leasing the land and paying with produce and the use of horses. Thus the revolutionary arrived with empty hands and immediately became a creditor of the Yakuts.[9] Apart from this, the Tsarist government paid its ex-

9. F. Kon, *op. cit.*

iled political enemy 12 rubles a month subsistence money, and 22 rubles a year clothing money. Lepeshinsky writes[10] that Lenin, too, received (and did not refuse) the 12 rubles a month, while Lepeshinsky himself got 16 rubles, because he was not just an exile but an exiled civil servant. F. Kon now assures us that this money was very much too little: but we know that prices in Siberia were one-half or one-third those in Russia, so that the state's maintenance allowance for exiles was in fact overgenerous. It enabled Lenin, for instance, to spend three whole years comfortably studying the theory of revolution, not worrying at all about the source of his livelihood. Martov writes that he paid his landlord 5 rubles a month for accommodation with full board, and spent the rest on books or put it aside for his escape. The Anarchist A. P. Ulanovsky says that in exile (in the Turukhan region, where he was with Stalin) he had money to spare for the first time in his life. He used to send part of it to a free girl whom he had met somewhere on the way, and could afford to sample cocoa for the first time. Elk meat and sturgeon could be had for nothing out there, and a good solid house cost 12 rubles (one month's subsistence money!). None of the politicals wanted for anything and all administrative exiles received a money allowance. And they were all well clad (they arrived in warm clothes).

True, exiles settled for life (the *bytoviki* of Soviet times) did not receive a cash allowance, but sheepskin coats, all their clothing and boots, came to them gratis from public funds. Chekhov established that on Sakhalin settlers received their basic needs from the state in kind, without payment, the men for two or three years, the women for the whole period of their sentence, and that this included 40 zolotniks (i.e., 200 grams) of meat a day, and three pounds (i.e., "a kilo two hundred") of bakery bread. As much as the Stakhanovites* in our Vorkuta mines got for producing 50 percent above the norm. (True, Chekhov finds that the bread is made from poor flour and underbaked, but it's no better in the camps!) They were issued with one sheepskin coat, a cloth coat, and several pairs of boots. Another of the Tsarist government's practices was to pay the exiles deliberately inflated prices for their wares to encourage them to produce. (Chekhov came to the conclusion that instead of the colony of Sakhalin bringing

10. Lepeshinsky, *Na Perelome (At the Turning Point).*

Russia any profit, Russia fed its colony.)

Needless to say, our Soviet political exile system could not rest on such unsound foundations. In 1928 the Second All-Russian Congress of Administrative Workers recognized that the existing system was unsatisfactory and petitioned for the "organization of places of exile in the form of *colonies* in remote and isolated localities, and also the introduction of a system of unspecified [i.e., indefinite] sentences."[11] From 1929 they started elaborating a system of exile in conjunction with forced labor.[12]

"He that does not work shall not eat"—that is the socialist principle. And the Soviet exile system could only be constructed on the basis of this socialist principle. But socialists were just the people who were used to receiving their food without payment in exile! Because the Soviet government did not dare to break this tradition immediately, its treasury also began paying political exiles—only of course not all of them, not the KR's (Counter-Revolutionaries), but the (socialist) "polits," making some gradations among them: for instance, in Chimkent in 1927, SR's and SD's* were given 6 rubles a month, and Trotskyites 30 (they were still comrades, after all, still Bolsheviks). Only these were no longer Tsarist rubles; the rent for the smallest of rooms was 10 rubles a month, and 20 kopecks a day bought only meager fare. As time went by things were harder. By 1933 they were paying the "polits" a grant of 6 rubles 25 a month. But in that year, as I myself very well remember, a kilogram of half-baked "commercial" rye bread (off the ration) cost 3 rubles. There was one thing left for the socialists—not language teaching, not writing theoretical works, but *back-breaking work.* From those who did go to work the GPU immediately took away whatever miserable allowance they were still receiving.

However, even if they were willing to work it was not so easy for exiles to earn a wage. The end of the twenties is of course memorable as a period of high unemployment in our country. Getting a job was the prerogative of persons with unblemished records and trade union cards, and exiles could not compete by exhibiting their education and experience. They also had the local police headquarters hanging menacingly over them—without its permission no employer would ever dare take on an exile. (Even

11. TsGAOR (Central State Archives of the October Revolution), 4042/38/8, pp. 34–35.
12. TsGAOR, 393/84/4, p. 97.

a former exile had little hope of a good job: the brand in his passport was an impediment.) In Kazan in 1934, as P. S——va remembers, a group of educated exiles in desperation hired themselves out as roadmakers. They were rebuked by police headquarters: what was the meaning of this demonstration? But no one offered to help them find other work, and Grigory B. paid the security officer in his own coin. "Haven't you got a *nice little trial* coming up? We could sign on as paid witnesses."

They had to count every crumb twice. This was what the Russian political exile system had come to! No time left for debate or for writing protests against the "Credo." One worry they were free from was how to cope with senseless idleness. . . . Their one concern now was: how to avoid dying of hunger. And how not to let themselves down by becoming stoolies.

In the first Soviet years in a land freed at last from age-old slavery, the pride and independence of political exiles sagged like a punctured balloon. It turned out that the strength which the previous regime had uneasily acknowledged in political prisoners was imaginary. What had created and maintained that strength was only *public opinion* in the country. Once public opinion was supplanted by *organized opinion,* the exiles with their protests and their rights were helplessly subjected to the tyranny of stupid, flustered GPU men and inhuman secret instructions. (Dzerzhinsky lived long enough to set his hand to the first of these instructions.) A single hoarse cry, one strangled word, to remind the free of your existence was now impossible: if an exiled worker sent a letter to his old factory, the worker who read it out (as Vasily Kirillovich Yegoshin did in Leningrad) was immediately exiled himself. Exiles now lost not only monetary allowances, the means of existence, but all rights whatsoever; the GPU could get at them to prolong their banishment, arrest them, or transport them even more easily than when they were supposed to be free, uninhibitedly treat them like rubber dolls rather than people.[13] Nothing was easier than to shake them up by means such as those once used in Chimkent: it was announced that the exile colony was to be wound up within twenty-four hours. In twenty-four hours

13. Those Western socialists who waited till 1967 to feel "ashamed of being socialists side by side with the Soviet Union" could very well have come to that conclusion some forty or forty-five years earlier. At that time Russian Communists were already destroying Russian socialists. But nobody groans when another man's tooth aches.

the exiles had to: hand over any business in which they were engaged, pull down their houses, get rid of their household goods, make their preparations for the journey, and set off by a prescribed route. It was not much easier than being a transported prisoner! Nor was the exile's future much more certain!

But forgetting for a moment the silence of the public and the heavy pressures of the GPU—what were the exiles themselves like? These Party members, so called, without parties? I am not thinking of the Cadets—there were no Cadets left; they had all been done to death—but asking what it meant by 1927 or 1930 to be nominally an SR or a Menshevik. Nowhere in the country were there any active groups corresponding to these names. For a long time now, ever since the Revolution, in ten storm-fraught years their programs had not been re-examined, and even if these parties had suddenly risen from the dead, nobody knew how they would interpret all that had happened and what they would propose. For a long time now the whole press had mentioned them only in the past tense, and surviving members lived with their families, worked at their jobs, and thought no more about their parties. But names once inscribed in the tablets of the GPU are indelible. At a sudden nocturnal signal these scattered rabbits were plucked from their burrows and transported via transit jails to, for instance, Bukhara.

Thus, I. V. Stolyarov arrived there in 1930 to meet aging SR's and SD's gathered in from all corners of the country. Rudely snatched from the lives they were used to, they had nothing better to do than begin arguing and assessing the current political situation and speculating what course history would have taken if only . . . and if only . . .

So their enemies knocked together from them not, of course, a political party, but a target for sinking.

Exiles of the twenties recall that the only live and militant party at that time was the Zionist Socialist Party with its vigorous youth organization, Hashomer, and its legal "Hehalutz" organization, which existed to establish Jewish agrarian communes in the Crimea. In 1926 the whole Central Committee was jailed, and in 1927 indomitably cheerful boys and girls of fifteen, sixteen, and under were taken from the Crimea and exiled. They were sent to Turtkul and other strict places. This really was a party—close-knit, determined, sure that its cause was just. Their aim, however, was not

one which all could share, but private and particular: to live as a nation, in a Palestine of their own. The Communist Party, which had voluntarily disowned its fatherland, could not tolerate narrow nationalism in others. . . .[14]

Mutual aid was still practiced among the exiles until the beginning of the thirties. Thus, SR, SD, and Anarchist exiles in Chimkent, where work was easy to find, set up a secret mutual aid fund to help their workless "Northern" party comrades. Communal arrangements for the preparation of food and the care of children, and all the gatherings and exchanges of visits which naturally go with this, were still found in places. They still joined together to celebrate May Day, there in exile (while demonstratively refusing to observe the anniversary of the October Revolution). But as the thirties reached their climax, all this would disappear: everywhere the buzzard's eye of the secret police would fix on exiles meeting in groups. Prisoners would begin to shun one another in case the NKVD suspected them of "organizing" and *picked them up "on a new charge"* (this fate awaited them anyhow). Thus in the pale of exile marked out by the state they would withdraw into a second, voluntary exile—into solitude. (This for the present would be just what Stalin wanted of them.)

The exiles were further weakened by the estrangement of the local population: the local people were persecuted for showing friendship to exiles, offenders were themselves exiled to other places, and youngsters expelled from the Komsomol.

They were still further weakened by the unfriendly relations between parties which developed in the Soviet period and became particularly acute from the mid-twenties, when large numbers of Trotskyites, who acknowledged no one but themselves as politicals, suddenly appeared in exile.

But it was of course not only socialists who were kept in exile in the twenties; most of the exiles, in fact (and this was truer with every year that passed), were not socialists at all. There was an influx of non-party intellectuals—those spiritually independent

14. It might be supposed that this natural and noble aspiration of the Zionists to recreate the land of their ancestors, to confirm the faith of their ancestors, and reassemble there after three thousand years of diaspora would elicit the united support and aid at least of the European peoples. Admittedly a national home in the Crimea was not the Zionist idea in its purest form, and perhaps it was Stalin's joke to invite this Mediterranean people to adopt Birobidian, on the edge of the taiga, as their second Palestine. He was a great master of slow and secret scheming, and perhaps this kind invitation was a rehearsal for the exile which he would have in mind for them in 1953.

people who were making it difficult for the new regime to establish itself firmly. And of *former people* (i.e., members of the pre-Revolutionary establishment) not destroyed in the Civil War. And even of young boys—"for fox-trotting."[15] And spiritualists. And occultists. And clerics—at first with the right to conduct services in exile. And simply believers, simply Christians or *krestyane* (peasants) to use the word as modified by the Russians many centuries ago.

They all came under the eye of the same security police sector, were divided from each other, and grew numb.

Robbed of all strength by the indifference of the country at large, the exiles lost even the will to escape. For exiles in Tsarist times escaping was a merry sport: think of Stalin's five, or Nogin's six escapes. The threat hanging over them was not a bullet, not *katorga,* but merely being resettled in their old place of exile after a diverting journey. But the MVD, as it grew more stupid and heavy-handed, from the mid-twenties imposed collective responsibility on exiles belonging to the same party: if one of you runs away all his party comrades will answer for him! By now the air was so stifling, the pressures so overbearing, that the socialists, so recently proud and indomitable, accepted this responsibility! They *themselves,* in party resolutions, *forbade themselves to escape!*

Where, in any case, could they run? To whom could they run? Was there a *people* to whom they might run?

Specialists in theoretical rationalization deftly put foundations under the decision: *This is not the right time to run away; we must wait.* In fact, it was *not the right time* to fight at all; again they must wait. At the beginning of the thirties, N. Y. Mandelstam noted that socialist exiles in Cherdynsk utterly refused to resist. Even when they sensed that their destruction was inevitable. Their only practical hope was an extension of their term of banishment, so long as they were not arrested, and were allowed to *sign on* again there, on the spot—then at least their modestly comfortable existence would not be ruined. Their only moral aim was to preserve their human dignity in the face of destruction.

It is strange for us, after *katorga,* where we changed from crushed and isolated individuals into a powerful whole, to learn that these socialists, once an articulated whole, tried and proved in action, disintegrated and became helpless units. But in the last

15. Siberia, in 1926. Vitkovsky's testimony.

two decades our life as social beings has steadily expanded, filled out. We are inhaling. Then it was just as steadily contracting, shrinking under pressure: we were exhaling.

So that it is unseemly for our age to judge that other.

There were, moreover, many different degrees of severity in the treatment of exiles, and this, too, disunited and weakened them. The intervals at which identity cards were exchanged varied (for some it was monthly, and the formalities were excruciatingly slow). Unless you didn't care about sinking to the lowest category, you had to observe the rules.

The mildest form of banishment also survived until the beginning of the thirties: this was not exile, but *"free residence . . . minus."* In this case the person penalized (the *minusnik*) was not told to live in one specified place, but allowed to choose any town, with certain exceptions, or "minuses." Once having chosen, he was tied to that place for the same three-year period. The *minusnik* did not have to report regularly to the GPU, but did not have the right to leave the area. In years of widespread unemployment, labor exchanges would not give a *minusnik* work: if he contrived to find himself a job, pressure was put on the management to dismiss him.

The *minus* pinned the dangerous insect down, and it submissively waited its turn to be arrested properly.

Then again, people still believed in a progressive order which could not and would not need to exile citizens! Believed in an amnesty, especially as the splendid tenth anniversary of October drew near! . . .

The amnesty came; the amnesty . . . struck. They started reducing terms of banishment by a quarter (three-year sentences by nine months), and that not for everyone. But since the Great Game of Patience was being laid out, and the three years of exile were followed by three years in a political isolation prison, followed in turn by another three years in exile, this acceleration of the process by three months did nothing to make life more beautiful.

Then it would be time for the next trial. The anarchist Dmitri Venediktov, toward the end of his three-year exile in Tobolsk (1937), was arrested, and the charge against him was categorical and precise: "disseminating rumors about loans" (What can they have meant by rumors, when the loan comes around each year as infallibly as the flowers in May?) "and dissatisfaction with the

Soviet regime" (an exile, of course, should be content with his lot!). And what happened to him next for these obscene crimes? He was sentenced to be shot within seventy-two hours, with no right of appeal! (His surviving daughter, Galina, has already made a brief appearance in the pages of this book.)

We have seen what exile meant in the first years of newly won freedom, and seen, too, the only way of escaping completely.

Exile was a temporary pen to hold sheep marked for slaughter. Exiles in the first Soviet decades were not meant to settle but to await the summons—elsewhere. There were clever people—"former" people, and also some simple peasants—who already realized in the twenties all that lay before them. And when they reached the end of their first three-year term they stayed exactly where they were—in Archangel, for instance—just in case. Sometimes this helped them not to be caught under the nit comb again.

This was what exile had become in our time, instead of the peace and quiet of Shushenskoye, or cocoa drinking in Turukhan.

You will see that we had heavier burdens than Ovid's homesickness to bear.

Chapter 2

■

The Peasant Plague

This chapter will deal with a small matter. Fifteen million souls. Fifteen million lives.

They weren't educated people, of course. They couldn't play the violin. They didn't know who Meyerhold was, or how interesting it is to be a nuclear physicist.

In the First World War we lost in all three million killed. In the Second we lost twenty million (so Khrushchev said; according to Stalin it was only seven million. Was Nikita being too generous? Or couldn't Iosif keep track of his capital?). All those odes! All those obelisks and eternal flames! Those novels and poems! For a quarter of a century all Soviet literature has been drunk on that blood!

But about the silent, treacherous Plague which starved fifteen million of our peasants to death, choosing its victims carefully and destroying the backbone and mainstay of the Russian people—about that Plague there are no books. No bugles bid our hearts beat faster for them. Not even the traditional three stones mark the crossroads where they went in creaking carts to their doom. Our finest humanists, so sensitive to today's injustices, in those years only nodded approvingly: Quite right, too! Just what they deserve!

It was all kept so dark, every stain so carefully scratched out, every whisper so swiftly choked, that whereas I now have to refuse kind offers of material on the camps—"No more, my friends, I have masses of such stories, I don't know where to put them!"—nobody brings me a thing about the deported peasants. Who is the person that could tell us about them? Where is he?

I know, all too well, that what is wanted here is not a chapter, nor even a book by one single man. And I cannot document even one chapter thoroughly.

All the same, I shall make a beginning. Set my chapter down as a marker, like those first stones—simply to mark the place where the new Temple of Christ the Saviour will someday be raised.

Where did it all start? With the dogma that the peasantry is *petit bourgeois?* (And who in the eyes of these people is not petit bourgeois? In their wonderfully clear-cut scheme, apart from factory workers [not the skilled workers, though] and big-shot businessmen, all the rest, the whole people—peasants, office workers, actors, airmen, professors, students, doctors—are nothing but the "petite bourgeoisie.") Or did it start with a criminal scheme in high places to rob some and terrorize the rest?

From the last letters which Korolenko wrote to Gorky in 1921, just before the former died and the latter emigrated, we learn that this villainous assault on the peasantry had begun even then, and was taking almost the same form as in 1930.

But as yet their strength did not equal their impudence, and they backed down.

The plan, however, remained in their heads, and all through the twenties they bullied and prodded and taunted: "Kulak! Kulak! Kulak!" The thought that it was impossible to live in the same world as the kulak was gradually built up in the minds of townspeople.

The devastating peasant Plague began, as far as we can judge, in 1929—the compilation of murder lists, the confiscations, the deportations. But only at the beginning of 1930 (after rehearsals were complete, and necessary adjustments made) was the public allowed to learn what was happening—in the decision of the Central Committee of the Party dated January 5. (The Party is "justified in shifting from a policy of restricting the exploiting tendencies of the kulaks to a policy of liquidating the kulaks as a class." And the admission of kulaks to the kolkhoz was immediately . . . prohibited. Would anyone like to attempt a coherent explanation?)

The dutifully concurring Central Executive Committee of the Soviets and the Council of People's Commissars were not far behind the Central Committee, and on February 1, 1930, they

gave legislative form to the will of the Party. Provincial Executive Committees were required to "use all necessary methods in the struggle with the kulaks, up to and including [in reality no other method was used] complete confiscation of the property of kulaks and their removal to points beyond the boundaries of certain regions and provinces."

Only in those last words was the Butcher overcome with shame. He specified *from which* boundaries. But he did not say *to which.* If you were inattentive enough you could take it to mean thirty versts away, in the same neighborhood.

In the Vanguard Doctrine, as far as I know, there was no such person as the *henchman* of kulaks. But as soon as the Party put its hand to the mowing machine, there was obviously no doing without him. We have seen already what the word is worth. A "sack collection" was announced, Young Pioneers went from hut to hut collecting from the peasants on behalf of the indigent state, you wouldn't give up your sack because it was like parting with your lifeblood (there were none in the shops, of course), and there you were, a "henchman of the kulaks." Ripe for deportation.

Names like this rampaged through a Soviet Russia with the bloody exhalations of the Civil War still warm in its nostrils. Words were put into circulation, and although they meant nothing they were easily remembered, they simplified matters, they made thought completely unnecessary. The savage law of the Civil War (Ten for every one! A hundred for every one!) was reinforced —to my mind an un-Russian law: where will you find anything like it in Russian history? For every activist (which usually meant big-mouthed loafer: A. Y. Olenyev is not the only one to recall that thieves and drunkards were in charge of "dekulakization")— for every *activist* killed in self-defense, hundreds of the most industrious, enterprising, and level-headed peasants, those who should keep the Russian nation on an even keel, were eliminated.

Yells of indignation! What's that? What do you say? What about the *bloodsuckers?* Those who squeezed their neighbors dry? "Take your loan—and pay me back with your hide"?

I suppose that bloodsuckers were a small part of the whole number (but were all the bloodsuckers there among them?). And were they bloodsuckers born? we may ask. Bloodsuckers through and through? Or was it just that all wealth—and all power—corrupts human beings? If only the "cleansing" of mankind, or of a social estate, were so simple! But if they had "cleansed" the

peasantry of heartless bloodsuckers with their fine-toothed iron comb, cheerfully sacrificing fifteen millions for the purpose—whence all those vicious, fat-bellied rednecks who preside over collectivized villages (and District Party Committees) today? Those pitiless oppressors of lonely old women and all defenseless people? How was the root of this predatory weed missed during dekulakization? Surely, heaven help us, they can't have sprung from the *activists?* . . .

He who grew up robbing banks could not think about the peasantry either as a brother or as a husbandman. He could only whistle like Nightingale the Robber, and millions of toiling peasants were dragged off to the taiga, horny-handed tillers of the soil, the very same who had set up the Soviet power simply to get land, and having obtained it, quickly tightened their grip on it. ("The land belongs to those who work it.")

The word "bloodsuckers" loses all resonance—the tongue that uses it is a clapper in a wooden bell—when we remember what a *clean sweep* they made of some villages in the Kuban, Urupinskaya for instance: they deported every soul in it, from babes in arms to aged men (and resettled it with demobilized soldiers). Here we see clearly what the "class principle" really meant. (Let us remember that the Kuban gave hardly any support to the Whites in the Civil War, began of its own accord to wreck Denikin's supply lines, and sought agreement with the Reds. Then, suddenly, there they were—"the saboteurs of the Kuban.") The village of Dolinka, renowned throughout the Archipelago as a prosperous agricultural center—where did it come from? *All* its inhabitants were Germans, "dekulakized" and deported in 1929. Who had been exploiting whom is a mystery.

The principle underlying dekulakization can also be clearly seen in the fate of the children. Take Shurka Dmitriyev, from the village of Masleno (Selishchenskie Kazarmy, near the Volkhov). He was thirteen when his father, Fyodor, died in 1925, and the only son in a family of girls. Who was to manage his father's holding? Shurka took it on. The girls and his mother accepted him as head of the family. A working peasant and an adult now, he exchanged bows with other adults in the street. He was a worthy successor to his hard-working father, and when 1929 came his bins were full of grain. Obviously a kulak! The whole family was driven out!

Adamova-Sliozberg has a moving story about meeting a girl

called Motya, who was jailed in 1936 for leaving her place of banishment without permission to go to her native village, Svetlovidovo near Tarussa, *two thousand kilometers on foot!* Sportsmen are given medals for that sort of thing. She had been exiled with her parents in 1929 when she was a little schoolgirl, and deprived of schooling forever. Her teacher's pet name for her was "Motya, our little Edison": the child was not only an excellent pupil, but had an inventive turn of mind, had rigged up a sort of turbine worked by a stream, and invented other things for the school. After seven years she felt an urge to look just once more at the log walls of her unattainable school—and for that "little Edison" went to prison and then to a camp.

Did any child suffer such a fate in the nineteenth century?

Every *miller* was automatically a candidate for dekulakization —and what were millers and blacksmiths but the Russian village's best technicians? Take the miller Prokop Ivanovich Laktyunkin from the Ryazan region. No sooner was he dekulakized than they ground the millstones together too hard and burned the mill down. After the war he was pardoned and returned to his native village, but he could not reconcile himself to the fact that there was no mill. Laktyunkin obtained permission, cast the grinders himself, and set up a mill on the same spot (it had to be the same spot!), not for his own profit, but for the kolkhoz, or rather because the neighborhood was incomplete and less beautiful without it.

Now let us look at that other kulak, the village blacksmith. In fact, we'll start with his father, as Personnel Departments like to do. His father, Gordei Vasilyevich, served for twenty-five years in the Warsaw garrison, and earned enough silver to make a tin button: this soldier with twenty-five years' service was denied a plot of land. He had married a soldier's daughter while he was in the garrison, and after his discharge he went to his wife's native place, the village of Barsuki in the Krasnensky district. The village got him tipsy, and he paid off its tax arrears with half of his savings. With the other half he leased a mill from a landowner, but quickly lost the rest of his money in this venture. He spent his long old age as a herdsman and watchman. He had six daughters, all of whom he gave in marriage to poor men, and an only son, Trifon (their family name was Tvardovsky). The boy was sent away to serve in a haberdasher's shop, but fled back to Barsuki and found employment with the Molchanovs, who had the forge. After a year as an unpaid laborer, and four years as an apprentice,

he became a smith himself, built a wooden house in the village of Zagorye, and married. Seven children were born (among them Aleksandr, the poet), and no one is likely to get rich from a forge. The oldest son, Konstantin, helped his father. If they smelted and hammered from one dawn to the next they could make five excellent steel axes, but the smiths of Roslavl, with their presses and their hired workmen, undercut their price. In 1929 their forge was still wood-built, they had only one horse, sometimes they had a cow and a calf, sometimes neither cow nor calf, and besides all this they had eight apple trees—you can see what bloodsuckers they were. . . . The Peasant Land Bank used to sell mortgaged estates on deferred payments. Trifon Tvardovsky had taken eleven desyatins of wasteland, all overgrown with bushes, and the year of the Plague found them still sweating and straining to clear it: they had brought five desyatins into cultivation, and the rest they abandoned to the bushes. The collectivizers marked them down for dekulakization—there were only fifteen households in the village and somebody had to be found. They assessed the income from the forge at a fantastic figure, imposed a tax beyond the family's means, and when it was not paid on time: Get ready to move, you damned kulaks, you!

If a man had a brick house in a row of log cabins, or two stories in a row of one-story houses—there was your kulak: Get ready, you bastard, you've got sixty minutes! There aren't supposed to be any brick houses in the Russian village, there aren't supposed to be two-story houses! Back to the cave! You don't need a chimney for your fire! This is our great plan for transforming the country: history has never seen the like of it.

But we still have not reached the innermost secret. The better off were sometimes left where they were, provided they joined the kolkhoz quickly, while the obstinate poor peasant who failed to apply was deported.

This is very important, the most important thing. The point of it all was not to dekulakize, but to force the peasants into the kolkhoz. Without frightening them to death there was no way of taking back the land which the Revolution had given them, and planting them on that same land as serfs.

It was a second Civil War—this time against the peasants. It was indeed the Great Turning Point, or as the phrase had it, the Great Break. Only we are never told what it was that broke.

It was the backbone of Russia.

■

No, we have been unfair to socialist realist writers: they have described the dekulakization, described it very fluently, too, and with great feeling for its heroes, as though they were hunters of snarling wolves.

But there are no descriptions of the long village street with every house in the row boarded up. Or of how you could walk through a village and see on the steps of a peasant house a dead woman with a dead child in her lap. Or an old man sitting under a fence, who asked you for bread—and when you walked back he had collapsed and died.

Nor shall we read in their works scenes like this: The chairman of the village soviet, taking the schoolteacher as a witness, goes into a hut where an old man and an old woman are lying on the sleeping bench. (The old man used to keep a teahouse—obviously a bloodsucker: who says wayfarers are glad of hot tea?) He brandishes his revolver. "Get down, you Tambov wolf!" The old woman starts howling, and the chairman fires at the ceiling, to intimidate them still more (a gun makes a very loud noise in a peasant hut). Both these old people died on their journey.

Still less will you read about this method of dekulakization: All the Cossacks (we are in a village on the Don) were summoned to a "meeting"—and there surrounded with machine guns, arrested, and driven away. Deporting their women later on was simplicity itself.

We can find described in books, or even see in films, barns and pits in the ground, full of grain hoarded by bloodsuckers. What they won't show us is the handful of belongings earned in a lifetime of toil: the livestock, the utensils—things as close to the owner as her own skin—which a weeping peasant woman is ordered to leave forever. (If some of the family survive, and are clever and persistent enough to persuade Moscow to rehabilitate them as "middle peasants," they will not find a stick of their "medium" property left when they return. It will have been pillaged by the *activists* and their women.)

What they will not show us are the little bundles with which the family are allowed onto the state's cart. We shall not learn that in the Tvardovsky house, when the evil moment came there was neither suet nor bread; their neighbor Kuzma saved them: he had several children and was far from rich himself,

but brought them food for the journey.

Those who were quick enough fled from that Plague to the towns, sometimes with a horse—but there were no customers for horses in those times: that peasant horse, sure sign of a kulak, became as bad as the Plague itself. Its master would tie it to a hitching rail at the horse market, give it one last pat on the muzzle, and go away before anyone noticed.

The years 1929–1930 are generally regarded as the years of the Plague. But its deathly stink hung over the countryside long afterward. In the Kuban in 1932, all the wheat and rye to the very last grain was taken straight from the threshing machine to the state procurement point, and when the collective farmers, who had been given nothing to eat except their harvesters' and threshers' rations, found that hot dinners ended with the threshing, and that there was not a grain to come for their labor—how could the mobs of howling women be silenced? *"How many kulaks are there left in this place?"* Who should be deported? (Skripnikova's testimony enables us to judge the condition of the kulak-free countryside in the early days of the kolkhoz: she remembers some peasant women in 1930 sending parcels of dried crusts home to their native village *from Solovki!!*)

Here is the story of Timofey Pavlovich Ovchinnikov, born in 1886, from the village of Kishkino in the Mikhnevsko area (not far from Leninskiye Gorki, near the great highroad). He fought in the German war, he fought in the Civil War. When he had finished fighting, he returned to land given by the Decree, and married. He was clever, literate, experienced, an excellent worker. He had also acquired, self-taught, some skill in veterinary medicine, and gave a helping hand to the whole district. By tireless work he built himself a good house, planted an orchard, and reared a colt to become a fine horse. But the NEP confused him, and Timofey Pavlovich was rash enough to believe in it as he had believed in the Land Decree. In partnership with another peasant he started a little business making cheap sausages. (Now that the village has been without sausage for forty years, you may scratch your head and wonder what was so bad about that.) They made the sausage themselves, used no hired labor, and indeed sold their products through a cooperative. When they had worked at it for just two years, 1925–1927, crippling tax demands were made on them, since they allegedly earned large sums (these were dreamed up by tax inspectors in the line of duty, but envious drones in the

village, incapable of making anything of themselves except *activists,* also blew into the taxman's ear). So the partners closed down. In 1929 Timofey was one of the first to join the kolkhoz, taking with him his good horse, his cow, and all his implements. He worked hard in the common fields, and also reared two steers for the kolkhoz. The kolkhoz began to collapse, and many walked or ran away from it, but Timofey had five children, and was stuck. Since the tax inspector couldn't forget old scores, and Timofey was still thought to be well off (partly because of the veterinary help he had given people), even now that he was in the kolkhoz they pursued him with tax demands, which he could not meet. When he had no money to pay, they started coming to his house and seizing bits of clothing: once his eleven-year-old son managed to drive their last three ewes off and hide them from the inventory takers, but on another occasion they, too, were taken. When they came yet again to list his belongings, the impoverished family had nothing else left, so the shameless tax inspectors put down the rubber plants and their tubs. This was more than Timofey could stand, and he hacked the plants to pieces before their very eyes. Now just consider the significance of his action. (1) He had destroyed property no longer belonging to him but to the state. (2) He had made use of an ax in a demonstration against the Soviet state. (3) He had sought to discredit the kolkhoz system.

Just then the kolkhoz system in the village of Kishkino was going to pieces fast. Nobody had any faith in it or wanted to work, half the peasants had left, and it was time to make an example of somebody. The hardened Nepman Timofey Ovchinnikov, who had wormed his way into the kolkhoz to wreck it, was now expelled as a kulak by decision of Shokolov, chairman of the village soviet. This was 1932, and mass deportation was over, so his wife and six children (one at the breast) were not deported, but only turned out of house and home. (A year later they made their way to Timofey in Archangel at their own expense. All the Ovchinnikovs had lived to be eighty, but after a life like this Timofey folded up at fifty-three.)[1]

1. What follows is not relevant to our immediate theme, but tells us a lot about our epoch. After a time, Timofey found a job in Archangel—in another "closed" sausage factory—where he was again one of two skilled men, this time with a manager over them. His own sausage factory had been closed as a menace to the working classes, whereas this other was "closed" so that the workers would not know of it. They privately supplied the rulers of that northern clime with a variety of expensive sausages. Timofey himself was sometimes sent to deliver their wares to the home of the regional Party secretary, Comrade Austrin

Even in 1935, drunken kolkhoz bosses went around the poverty-stricken village at Easter demanding money for vodka from those peasants who still farmed their own holdings. Give, or "We'll dekulakize you. We'll deport you." They could, too. If you farmed by yourself. This was what the Great Break was all about.

The journey itself, the peasant's *Via Crucis,* is something which our socialist realists do not describe at all. Get them aboard, pack them off—and that's the end of the story. Episode concluded. Three asterisks, please.

They were loaded onto carts . . . if they were lucky enough to be taken in the warm months, but it might be onto sledges in a cruel frost, with children of all ages, babes in arms as well. In February, 1931, when hard frosts were interrupted only by blizzards, the strings of carts rolled endlessly through the village of Kochenevo (Novosibirsk oblast), flanked by convoy troops, emerging from the snowbound steppe and vanishing into the snowbound steppe again. Even going into a peasant hut for a warm-up required special permission from the convoy, which was given only for a few minutes, so as not to hold up the cart train. (Those GPU convoy troops—they're still alive, they're pensioners now! I daresay they remember it all! Or perhaps . . . they can't remember.) They all shuffled into the Narym marshes—and in those insatiable quagmires they all remained. Many of the children had already died a wretched death on the cruel journey.

This was the nub of the plan: the peasant's seed must perish together with the adults. Since Herod was no more, only the Vanguard Doctrine has shown us how to destroy utterly—down to the very babes. Hitler was a mere disciple, but he had all the luck: his murder camps have made him famous, whereas no one has any interest in ours at all.

The peasants knew what was in store for them. And if it was their good fortune to be transported through inhabited places, when they halted they would slip small children not too small to climb through windows. Kind people may help you! Beg your way in the world! It's better than dying with us.

(In Archangel in the famine years of 1932–1933, the destitute children of resettled peasants were not given free school lunches

—a detached one-story house behind a high fence where Liebknecht Street meets Chumbarov-Luchinsky Street—and to the NKVD chief in the oblast, Comrade Sheiron.

and clothing vouchers, as were others in need.)

In that convoy of Don Cossacks, when the men arrested at the "meeting" were carried separately from their women, one woman gave birth to a child on the journey. Their rations were one glass of water a day, and 300 grams of bread not every day. Was there a medical attendant? Need you ask? The mother had no milk, and the child died on the way. Where were they to bury it? Two soldiers climbed in for a short trip between two stations, opened the door while the train was moving, and threw the tiny body out.

(This transport was driven to the great Magnitogorsk building operation.* Their husbands were brought to join them. Dig away, house yourselves! From Magnitogorsk on, our bards have done their duty and *reflected* . . . reality?)

The Tvardovsky family were carted only as far as Yelnya, and luckily it was April. There they were loaded into boxcars. The boxcars were locked, and there were no pails, or holes in the floor, for them to relieve themselves. Risking punishment, perhaps even imprisonment, for attempted escape, Konstantin Trifonovich cut a hole in the floor with a kitchen knife, while the train was moving and there was a lot of noise. The feeding arrangements were simple: once every three days pails of soup were brought along at main stations. True, they were only traveling for ten days (to a station called Lyalya in the Northern Urals). It was still winter there, and the transport was met by hundreds of sledges, which carried them up the frozen river into the forest. There they found a hut for twenty loggers, but more than five hundred people had been brought, and it was evening. The Komsomol in charge of the place, a Permian called Sorokin, showed them where to knock pegs into the ground: there'll be a street here, there'll be houses there. This was how the settlement of Parcha was founded.

It is hard to believe in such cruelty: on a winter evening out in the taiga they were told: You've arrived! Can human beings really behave like this? Well, they're moved by day so they arrive at nightfall—that's all there is to it. Hundreds and hundreds of thousands were carried into the wilds and dumped down like this, old men, women, children, and all. On the Kola Peninsula (Appatity) people lived through the dark polar winter in thin tents under the snow. But was it so very much more merciful to take trainloads of Volga Germans in summer (summer, 1931, not 1941 —don't confuse the dates!) to waterless places in the Karaganda steppe, ration their water, and order them to make themselves

earth houses? There, too, winter would come soon enough (by the spring of 1932 the children and the old had all died of dysentery and malnutrition). In Karaganda itself, and in Magnitogorsk, they built long, low communal buildings of earth like vegetable storehouses. On the White Sea Canal the new arrivals were housed in huts vacated by prisoners. Those who were sent to work on the Volga Canal, even just beyond Khimki, were unloaded *before* there was a camp, tipped out on the ground as soon as the hydrographic survey was completed, and told to start swinging picks and wheeling barrows. (The papers reported the "delivery of machinery for the canal.") There was no bread. They had to build their earth houses in their spare time. (Nowadays pleasure boats carry Moscow sightseers over this spot. There are bones on the bottom, bones in the ground, bones in the concrete.)

As the Plague approached in 1929, all the churches in Archangel were closed: they were due to be closed anyway, but the very real need for somewhere to put the dekulakized hurried things along. Great streams of deported peasants poured through Archangel, and for a time the whole town became one big transit prison. Many-tiered sleeping platforms were put up in the churches, but there was no heat. Consignment after consignment of human cattle was unloaded at the station, and with dogs barking around them, the bast-shod went sullenly to church and a bed of planks. (S., then a boy, would never forget one peasant walking along with a shaft bow around his neck: he had been hurried away before he could decide what would be most useful. Another man carried a gramophone with a horn. Cameramen—there's work for you in this! . . .) In the Church of the Presentation, an eight-tiered bed platform which was not fastened to the wall collapsed in the night and several families were crushed. Their cries brought troops rushing to the church.

This was how they lived in that plague-stricken winter. They could not wash. Their bodies were covered with festering sores. Spotted fever developed. People were dying. Strict orders were given to the people of Archangel not to help the *special resettlers* (as the deported peasants were now called)! Dying peasants roamed the town, but no one could take a single one of them into his home, feed him, or carry tea out to him: the militia seized local inhabitants who tried to do so and took away their passports. A starving man would stagger along the street, stumble, fall—and die. But even the dead could not be picked up (besides the militia,

plainclothesmen went around on the lookout for acts of kindness). At the same time market gardeners and livestock breeders from areas near big towns were also being expelled, whole villages at a time (once again—what about the theory that they were supposed to arrest exploiters only?), and the residents of Archangel themselves dreaded deportation. They were afraid even to stop and look down at a dead body. (There was one lying near GPU headquarters, which no one would remove.)

They were buried in an *organized* fashion: by the sanitation department. Without coffins, of course, in common graves, next to the old city cemetery on Vologda Street—out in open country. No memorials were erected.

And this was while the tillers were still only in transit. There was also a great camp for them beyond the village of Talagi, where some of them were given jobs loading timber. But one man contrived to write a letter abroad on a log (see what happens if you teach peasants to read and write!), and they were all taken off the job. Their path was still a long one—to Onega, Pinega, and up the river Dvina.

We had a joke in the camp: "They can't send you farther than the sun." But these peasants were sent farther, to a place where there would long be no shelter for a tallow dip.

The plight of these peasants differed from that of all previous and subsequent Soviet exiles in that they were banished not to a center of population, a place made habitable, but to the haunt of wild beasts, into the wilderness, to man's primitive condition. No, worse: even in their primeval state our forebears at least chose places near water for their settlements. For as long as mankind has existed no one has ever made his home elsewhere. But for the *special settlements* the Cheka (not the peasants themselves—they had no right of choice) chose places on stony hillsides (100 meters up above the river Pinega, where it was impossible to dig down to water, and nothing would grow in the soil). Three or four kilometers off there might be convenient water meadows—but no, according to instructions no one was supposed to settle there. So the hayfields were dozens of kilometers away from the settlement, and the hay had to be brought in by boat. Sometimes settlers were bluntly *forbidden to sow grain crops.* (What they should grow was also determined by the Cheka!) Yet another thing we town folk do not understand—what it means to have lived from time immemorial with animals. A peasant's life is nothing without ani-

mals—and here he was condemned for many years never to hear neighing or lowing or bleating; never to saddle, never to milk, never to fill a trough.

On the river Chulym in Siberia, the special settlement of Kuban Cossacks was encircled with barbed wire and towers were put up, as though it were a prison camp.

Everything necessary seemed to have been done to ensure that these odious work fiends should die off quickly and rid our country of themselves and of bread. Indeed, many such special settlements died off to a man. Where they once stood, chance wayfarers are gradually burning what is left of the huts, and kicking the skulls out of sight.

No Genghis Khan ever destroyed so many peasants as our glorious Organs, under the leadership of the Party.

Take, for instance, the Vasyugan tragedy. In 1930, 10,000 families (60,000–70,000 people, as families then went) passed through Tomsk and from there were driven farther, at first on foot, down the Tom although it was winter, then along the Ob, then upstream along the Vasyugan—still over the ice. (The inhabitants of villages on the route were ordered out afterward to pick up the bodies of adults and children.) In the upper reaches of the Vasyugan and the Tara they were marooned on patches of firm ground in the marshes. *No food or tools were left for them.* The roads were impassable, and there was no way through to the world outside, except for two brushwood paths, one toward Tobolsk and one toward the Ob. Machine-gunners manned barriers on both paths and let no one through from the death camp. They started dying like flies. Desperate people came out to the barriers begging to be let through, and were shot on the spot. Rather late in the day, when the rivers unfroze, barges carrying flour and salt were sent from the Tomsk Integralsoyuz (Producers' and Consumers' Cooperative), but they could not get up the Vasyugan. (Stanislavov was the Integralsoyuz agent in charge of the shipment, and it is from him that we know this.)

They died off—every one of them.

We are told that there was at least an inquiry into this business, and even that one man was shot. I am not much inclined to believe it. But even if it is so—the ratio is an acceptable one! The ratio with which we are familiar from the Civil War. For one of ours —a thousand of yours! For sixty thousand of yours—one of ours!

There's no other way to build the New Society.

And yet—exiles survived! Under their conditions it seems incredible—but live they did.

In the settlement at Parcha the day was started by foremen (Komi-Zyrians) with sticks. All their lives these peasants had begun their day themselves, but now they were driven out with sticks to fell and raft timber. By giving them no chance to get dry for months on end, by cutting down the flour ration, the masters exacted their stint from them—and in the evenings they could get on with homemaking. Their clothes fell to pieces on their bodies, and they wore sacks like skirts, or else stitched trousers from them.

If they had all died off, a number of towns we know today would not exist. Igarka, for instance. The building of Igarka, from 1929 on, was carried out and completed by—whom? The Northern and Polar Timber Trust? I wonder. Or was it perhaps dekulakized peasants? They lived in tents at 50 degrees below—but they made possible the first timber exports from the area as early as 1930.

The former kulaks lived in their *special* settlements like zeks in maximum punishment camps. Although there was no boundary fence, there was usually a man with a rifle living in the settlement, and he alone said yea and nay, he had the right, on his own authority and with no beating about the bush, to shoot anyone deemed unruly.

The civic category to which the special settlements belonged, their blood ties with the Archipelago, will quickly become clearer if you remember the law governing a fluid in interconnected receptacles. If a shortage of labor was felt at Vorkuta, special settlers were transferred (without retrial! without relabeling!) from their settlements to the camps. And they lived behind the wire as meekly as you could wish, went to work behind more wire, ate dishwater soup, only they paid for it (and for their guards, and for their huts) out of their wages. And no one saw anything surprising in this.

The special settlers were also torn from their families, and shifted from settlement to settlement, just as zeks were shifted from camp to camp.

In one of those strange vagaries to which our legislation is subject, the U.S.S.R. Central Executive Committee promulgated a decision on July 3, 1931, permitting the restoration of civil rights

to former kulaks after five years, if—in a settlement under police control, mind you!—"if they have engaged in socially useful work and shown their loyalty to the Soviet regime" (by, let us say, helping the rifleman, the settlement manager, or the security officer at his tasks). But this was mere foolishness, the whim of a moment. And anyway, as the five years were ending, so the Archipelago was hardening.

There seemed to be never a year in which it was possible to make conditions easier: first there was the time after Kirov's assassination; then 1937–1938; then from 1939 there was war in Europe; and in 1941 our own war began. So that a safer way was found: from 1937 on, many of these same hapless alleged kulaks and their sons were plucked out of the special settlements, labeled with a clause from Article 58, and shoved into the camps.

True, when during the war there was a shortage of reckless Russian fighting power at the front, they turned among others to the "kulaks": they must surely be Russians first and kulaks second! They were invited to leave the special settlements and the camps for the front to defend their sacred fatherland.

And—they went. . . .

Not all of them, however. N. Kh——v, a "kulak's" son—whose early years I used for Tyurin,* but whose subsequent biography I could not bring myself to recount—was given the chance, denied to Trotskyite and Communist prisoners, however much they yearned to go, of defending his fatherland. Without a moment's hesitation, Kh——v snapped back at the head of the Prisoner Registration and Distribution Section: "It's your fatherland—you defend it, you dung-eaters! *The proletariat has no fatherland!*"

Marx's exact words, I believe, and certainly any camp dweller was still poorer, still lower, still less privileged than any proletarian—but the camp disciplinary board had not mastered this fact, and it sentenced Kh——v to be shot. He sat in jail two weeks with a *topper* hanging over him, hating them too much to appeal for clemency. It was they who made a move, and commuted his sentence to a further *tenner.*

It sometimes happened that they transported ex-"kulaks" out into the tundra or the taiga, let them loose, and forgot about them. Why keep count when you'd taken them there to die? They didn't even leave a rifleman—the place was too remote, too inaccessible. Now that the mysteriously wise leaders had dismissed them—

without horses, without plows, without fishing tackle, without guns—this hard-working and stubborn race of men, armed perhaps with a few axes and shovels, began the hopeless fight for life in conditions scarcely easier than in the Stone Age. And in defiance of the economic laws of socialism, some of these settlements not only survived, but became rich and vigorous!

In one such settlement, somewhere on the Ob, but on a backwater, nowhere near the navigation channel, Burov had landed as a boy, and there he grew up. He tells the story that one day before the war a passing launch noticed them and stopped. The people in the launch turned out to be the district bosses. They interrogated the Burovs—where had they come from and how long ago? The bosses were amazed at their wealth and well-being, the like of which they'd never seen in their collectivized region. They went away. A few days later plenipotentiaries arrived with NKVD troops, and once again, as in the year of the Plague, they were ordered to abandon within an hour all that they had earned for themselves, all the warmth and comfort of their settlement, and dispatched with nothing but a few bundles deeper into the tundra.

Perhaps this story is enough in itself to explain the true meaning of "kulak" and of "dekulakization"?

The things that could have been done with such people if they had been allowed to live and develop freely!!!

The Old Believers—eternally persecuted, eternal exiles—they are the ones who three centuries earlier divined the ruthlessness at the heart of Authority! In 1950 a plane was flying over the vast basin of the Podkamennaya Tunguska. The training of airmen had improved greatly since the war, and the zealous aviator spotted something that no one before him had seen in twenty years: an unknown dwelling place in the taiga. He worked out its position. He reported it. It was far out in the wilds, but to the MVD all things are possible, and half a year later they had struggled through to it. What they had found were the Yaruyevo Old Believers. When the great and longed-for Plague began—I mean collectivization—they had fled from this blessing into the depths of the taiga, a whole village of them. And they lived there without ever poking their noses out, allowing only their headman to go to Yaruyevo for salt, metal fishing and hunting gear, and bits of iron for tools. Everything else they made themselves, and in lieu of money the headman no doubt came provided with pelts. When he had completed his business he would slink away from the market-

place like a hunted criminal. In this way the Yaruyevo Old Believers had won themselves twenty years of life! Twenty years of life as free human beings among the wild beasts, instead of twenty years of kolkhoz misery. They were all wearing homespun garments and homemade knee boots, and they were all exceptionally sturdy.

Well, these despicable deserters from the kolkhoz front were now all arrested, and the charge pinned on them was . . . guess what? Links with the international bourgeoisie? Sabotage? No, Articles 58-10, on Anti-Soviet Agitation (!?!?), and 58-11, on hostile organizations. (Many of them landed later on in the Dzhezkazgan group of Steplag, which is how I know about them.)

In 1946 some other Old Believers were stormed in a forgotten monastery somewhere in the backwoods by our valiant troops, dislodged (with the help of mortars, and the skills acquired in the Fatherland War), and floated on rafts down the Yenisei. Prisoners still, and still indomitable—the same under Stalin as they had been under Peter!—they jumped from the rafts into the waters of the Yenisei, where our Tommy-gunners finished them off.

Warriors of the Soviet Army! Tirelessly consolidate your combat training!

No, the doomed race did not all die out! In exile more children were born to them—and they, too, were attached by inheritance to the same special settlements. ("The son does not answer for the father"—remember?) If a girl from outside married a special settler, she passed into the serf class, and lost her rights as a citizen. If a man married *one of those,* he became an exile himself. If a daughter came to visit her father, they corrected their error in missing her before, and added her to the list of special settlers. These additions made good the deficit as settlers were transferred to the camps.

Special settlers were very conspicuous in Karaganda and round about. There were a lot of them there. They were attached *in perpetuity* to the mines of Karaganda, as their ancestors had been to the factories of the Urals and the Altai. The "mine owner" was free to work them as hard and pay them as little as he liked. We are told that they greatly envied prisoners in agricultural Camp Divisions.

Until the fifties, and in some places until the death of Stalin, special settlers had no passports. Only with the war did the Igarka

exiles begin receiving the polar wage rate.

But now that they have survived twenty years of plague and exile, now that they are free at last from police supervision, now that they hold their proud Soviet passports—who and what are they, in their hearts and in their behavior? Why, what else but Soviet citizens, guaranteed in good condition! Exactly the same as those reared simultaneously by the workers' settlements, trade union meetings, and service in the Soviet Army! They, too, can muster the courage to slam down their dominoes almost boldly. They, too, nod agreement to every shadowy presence on the television screen. When required, they, too, will angrily stigmatize the Republic of South Africa, or collect their kopecks for the benefit of Cuba.

So let us lower our eyes in awe before the Great Butcher, bend our heads and bow our shoulders in the face of the intellectual puzzle he sets us: was he right after all, that reader of men's hearts, to stir up that frightening mixture of blood and mud, and to go on churning year in and year out?

He was right, morally. No one bears him a grudge! In his day, so ordinary folk say, it was "better than under Khrushchev": why, on April Fool's Day, year in and year out, cigarettes went down a kopeck and fancy goods ten. Eulogies and hymns rang in his ears till the day of his death, and even today we are not allowed to denounce him. Not only will any censor stay your pen, but anyone standing in a shop or sitting in a train will hasten to check the blasphemy on your lips.

We honor Great Evildoers. We venerate Great Murderers.

And he was even more right politically. This bloody mix was the cement for obedient kolkhozes. No matter that within a quarter of a century the village would be a desert and the people spiritually extinct. No matter; our rockets would be flying into space, and the enlightened West fawning on us, cringing before our achievements and our might.

Chapter 3

■

The Ranks of Exile Thicken

Only the peasants were deported so ferociously, to such desolate places, with such frankly murderous intent: no one had been exiled in this way before, and no one would be in the future. Yet in another sense and in its own steady way, the world of exiles grew denser and darker from year to year: more were banished, they were settled more thickly, the rules became more severe.

We could offer the following rough time scheme. In the twenties, exile was a sort of preparatory stage, a way station before imprisonment in a camp. For very few did it all end with exile; nearly all were later raked into the camps.

From the mid-thirties and especially from Beria's time, perhaps because the world of exile became so populous (think how many Leningrad alone contributed!), it acquired a completely independent significance as a totally satisfactory form of restriction and isolation. In the war and postwar years, the exile system steadily grew in capacity and importance together with the camps. It required no expenditure on the construction of huts and boundary fences, on guards and warders, and there was room in its capacious embrace for big batches, especially those including women and children. (At all major transit prisons cells were kept permanently available for women and children, and they were never empty.)[1] Exile made possible a speedy, reliable, and irreversible cleansing of any important region in the "mainland." The exile

1. Husbands who were also being deported did not travel with their wives: there was a standing order that members of condemned families should be sent to different places. Thus, when the Kishinev lawyer I. K. Gornik was exiled as a Zionist to the Krasnoyarsk region, his family were sent to Salekhard.

system established itself so firmly that from 1948 it acquired yet another function of importance to the state—that of rubbish dump or drainage pool, where the waste products of the Archipelago were tipped so that they would never make their way back to the mainland. In spring, 1948, this instruction was passed down to the camps: at the end of their sentences 58's, with minor exceptions, were to be *released into exile.* In other words, they were not to be thoughtlessly unleashed on a country which did not belong to them, but each individual was to be delivered under escort from the camp guardhouse to the commandant's office in an exile colony, from fish trap to fish trap. Since the exile system embraced only certain strictly defined areas, these together constituted yet another separate (though interlocking) country between the U.S.S.R. and the Archipelago—a sort of purgatory in reverse, from which a man could cross to the Archipelago, but not to the mainland.

The years 1944–1945 brought to the exile colonies unusually heavy reinforcements from the "liberated" (occupied) territories, and 1947–1949 yet others from the Western republics. All these streams together, even without the exiled peasants, exceeded many times over the figure of 500,000 exiles which was all that Tsarist Russia, the prison house of nations, could muster in the whole course of the nineteenth century.

For what crimes was a citizen of our country in the thirties and forties punishable by exile or banishment? (Bureaucrats must have derived some strange pleasure from this distinction, since though not observed, it was continually mentioned throughout those years. When M. I. Bordovsky, who was persecuted for his religion, expressed surprise that he had been exiled without trial, Lieutenant Colonel Ivanov graciously explained: "The reason there was no trial is because this is not exile but banishment. We do not regard you as a convicted person, and are not even depriving you of your electoral rights." These, of course, being the most important constituent part of civil freedom!)

The commonest crimes can easily be indicated:

1. Belonging to a criminal nationality (for this see the next chapter).
2. A previous term of imprisonment in the camps.
3. Residence in a criminal environment (seditious Leningrad,

or areas in which there was a partisan movement, such as the Western Ukraine or the Baltic States).

And then many of the tributaries enumerated at the very beginning of this book branched out to feed the exile system as well as the camps, continually casting up some of their burden on the shores of exile. Who were these people? Above all the families of men condemned to the camps. But families were by no means always drawn in, and it was by no means only the families of prisoners who poured into exile. Just as it requires extensive knowledge of hydrodynamics to explain the currents in a fluid, without which you can only observe in despair the chaotically swirling and howling element, so here: we lack the information to study all the differential impulses which in various years, for no apparent reason, sent various people not to camps but into exile. We can only observe the bewildering mixture of resettlers from Manchuria; individual foreign subjects (even in exile they were not allowed by Soviet law to intermarry with fellow exiles who were nonetheless Soviet subjects); certain Caucasians (no one remembers a single Georgian among them) and Central Asians, who for having been prisoners of war were sentenced not to the usual ten years in a camp but a mere six years of exile; and even some former prisoners of war, Siberians, who were sent back to their native districts and lived there as free men, without having to report to the police, but also without the right to leave the district.

We cannot go into the different types and cases of exile, because all our knowledge of it derives from casual stories or letters. If A. M. Ar——v had not written his letter, the reader would not have the following story. In 1943 news came to a village around Vyatka that one of its kolkhoz peasants, Kozhurin, a private in the infantry, had either been sent to a punitive unit or shot outright. His wife, who had six children (the oldest was ten years, the youngest six months old, and two sisters of hers, spinsters nearing fifty, also lived with her), was immediately visited by the *executants* (you already know the word, reader—it is a euphemism for "executioners"). They gave the family no time to sell anything (their house, cow, sheep, hay, wood, were all abandoned to the pilferers), threw all nine of them with their smaller possessions onto a sledge, and took them sixty kilometers in a hard frost to the town of Vyatka (Kirov). Why they did not freeze on the way God only knows. They were kept for six weeks at the Kirov Transit Prison, then

sent to a small pottery near Ukhta. The spinster sisters ate from rubbish heaps, both went mad and both died. The mother and children stayed alive only thanks to the help (the politically ignorant, unpatriotic, in fact anti-Soviet help) of the local population. The sons all served in the army when they grew up and are said to have "completed their military and political training with distinction." Their mother returned to her native village in 1960—and found not a single log, not a single brick from the stove, where her house had been.

A little cameo like this can surely be threaded on the necklace of our Great Fatherland Victory? But nobody will touch it—it isn't *typical.*

To what necklace will you add, to what category of exiles will you assign soldiers disabled in the Fatherland War, and exiled because of it? We know almost nothing about them; in fact, hardly anyone else seems to. But refresh your memory. How many such cripples—some of them still not old—were there crawling around market tearooms and suburban trains at the end of the war? Then their ranks were swiftly and discreetly thinned. This was also a current, a campaign. They were exiled to a certain northern island —exiled *because* they had consented to be mutilated in war for the glory of the Fatherland and *in order to* improve the health of a nation, which had by now won such victories in all forms of athletics and ball games. These luckless war heroes are held there on their unknown island, naturally without the right to correspond with the mainland (a very few letters break through, and this is how we know about it), and naturally on meager rations, because they cannot work hard enough to warrant generosity.

I believe they are still living out their days there.

—

The great purgatory in reverse, the land of exile that lay between the U.S.S.R. and the Archipelago, included big towns, small towns, settlements, and completely uninhabited areas. Exiles tried to get permission to go to the towns, rightly considering that "it's easier there for the likes of us," particularly in the matter of work. And that their lives would be more like those of ordinary people.

Perhaps the main capital of the exile world, and certainly one of its pearls, was Karaganda. I saw something of it before the end of general exile, in 1955. (The police had allowed me, an exile, to go there for a short time. I was going to get married, to another exile.) At the entrance to what was then a hungry town, near the

ramshackle station building which trams could not approach too closely (for fear of falling through into mine workings near the surface), and next to the tram turntable stood a truly symbolic brick house, its wall buttressed by wooden beams to prevent it from collapsing. In the center of the new section of town the words "Coal is bread" (for industry) were set in stone in a stone wall. And indeed, black bread was on sale in the shops there every day —this was what made exile in town so much easier. There was heavy work to be had, too, and some less heavy. For the rest, the food shops were pretty empty, while dizzy prices made the market stalls unapproachable. Two-thirds if not three-quarters of the town's inhabitants at that time had no passports and were required to report to the police. From time to time I was recognized and hailed in the streets by former zeks, particularly zeks from Ekibastuz. What sort of life did an exile have there? At work an inferior position and depressed wage, for not everybody after the catastrophe of arrest, prison, and camp had the means of proving his qualifications, and any allowance for length of service was still less likely. Or perhaps they were simply in the position of Negroes who do not get paid on the same level as whites: if you don't want the job you can please yourself. Then there was a great shortage of apartments. Exiles lived in unscreened corners of corridors, in dark box rooms, in little sheds—and always paid through the nose, because it was all rented privately. Women no longer young, worn to a frazzle by the camps, with metal teeth, dreamed of having one crepe de Chine "going-out" blouse and one pair of "going-out" shoes.

Then again, distances in Karaganda are great and many people had a long way to travel to work. It took the tram a whole hour to grind its way from the center to the industrial outskirts. In the tram opposite me sat a worn-out young woman in a dirty skirt and broken sandals. She was holding a child with a very dirty diaper, and she kept falling asleep. As her arms relaxed, the child would slide to the edge of her lap and almost fall. People shouted, "You'll drop him!" She managed to grab him in time, but a few minutes later she would be falling asleep again. She was on the night shift at the water tower, and had spent the day riding around town looking for shoes—and never finding them.

That was what exile in Karaganda was like.

As far as I can judge, it was much easier in Dzhambul: in the fertile southern belt of Kazakhstan food was very cheap. But the

smaller the town, the harder it was to find work.

Take the little town of Yeniseisk. When G. S. Mitrovich was being taken there from the Krasnoyarsk Transit Prison in 1948, he asked the lieutenant escorting his party whether there would be work. "Of course there will," the lieutenant cheerfully replied. "And somewhere to live?" "Of course." But having handed them over to the command post, the escort went off, traveling light. While the new arrivals had to sleep beneath overturned boats on the riverbank, or under open-sided sheds in the marketplace. They could not buy bread: bread was sold to those with a fixed address; and the new arrivals could not register: to find lodgings you had to put down money. Mitrovich, who was entitled to a disablement pension, asked for work in his own profession (he was a livestock specialist). The post commander did a bit of quick thinking and telephoned the Agricultural Department of the district soviet. "Listen, if you give me a bottle I'll give you a livestock specialist."

This was a place of exile where the threat "For sabotage you'll get 58-14; we'll put you back in the camp" frightened nobody. Another piece of information about Yeniseisk dates from 1952. One day when they went in to report, the desperate exiles started asking the post commander to arrest them and send them back to the camp. Grown men, they could not earn their bread in that place! The post commander chased them away. "The MVD isn't an employment office, you know."[2]

Here is an even more Godforsaken place—Taseyevo, in Krasnoyarsk territory, 250 kilometers from Kansk. This was used as a place of exile for Germans, for Chechens and Ingush, and for former zeks. It is not a new place, not recently invented. The village of Khandaly, where in the old days they used to forge chains (*kandaly*) for convicts, is nearby. But what is new there is a whole town of earth houses, with earth floors. In 1949 a group of *repeaters* was brought there toward evening and unloaded at the school. A commission met late at night to take over the new work force: the commander of the district MVD post, someone from the Timber Cooperative, the kolkhoz chairmen. Before the commission passed in slow procession people old and sick, exhausted by *tenners* in the camps, and most of them women—it was they

2. He had no obligation to know, and the prisoners were not allowed to know, the laws of the land of the Soviets—Article 35 of its Criminal Code, for instance: "Exiles must be endowed with land or provided with paid work."

whom the state in its wisdom had excluded from the dangerous towns and thrown into this harsh region to tame the taiga. The employers were reluctant to take such workers, but the MVD left them no choice. The most hopeless rejects among the goners were foisted on the salt works, whose representative was late for the meeting. The salt works were on the river Usolka at the village of Troitsk (also an ancient place of exile—Old Believers were driven there in the reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich). In the middle of the twentieth century, the technique in use was this: they drove horses around in circles to pump brine onto filters, and then obtained salt by evaporation. (The firewood was brought from the logging sections—this was where they hurled the old women into action.) A successful and well-known naval architect had landed in this party: he was given a job as close as possible to his old profession —packing salt in boxes.

Knyazev, a sixty-year-old worker from Kolomna, fetched up in Taseyevo. He was past working, and had to beg. Sometimes people would take him home for the night, sometimes he slept in the street. There was no room for him in the old people's home, and the hospital wouldn't keep him for long at a time. One winter's day he crawled up the steps of the raikom—the local committee of the workers' party—and froze to death.

Zeks transported from a camp to exile in the taiga (in twenty degrees of frost, in the backs of open lorries, ill clad, with only the clothes they were released in, in superannuated tarpaulin shoes, while the escort troops were wearing sheepskin coats and felt boots) could not believe their senses: was their release to mean no more than this? In the camp there were heated huts—and here they had an earth house left by loggers, and unheated since last winter. The power saws had roared in the camps, and they roared here. These saws were the only means in either place of earning a ration of half-baked bread.

So that new exiles were apt to make mistakes, and when in 1953 the Deputy Director of the Timber Enterprise, Leibovich, arrived all clean and handsome at Kuzeyevo, in the Sukhobuzim district, Yenisei, they took one look at his leather overcoat and his sleek, pale face and greeted him incorrectly: "Good day, *citizen chief!*"

Leibovich wagged his head reproachfully: "No, no—what's all this 'citizen' stuff! You must call me *comrade* now; you aren't prisoners any more."

The exiles were assembled in the one and only earth house, and

the Deputy Director harangued them by the somber light of a spluttering oil lamp, like a man hammering nails into a coffin:

"Don't imagine that you are here temporarily. You really will have to live here *forever.* So get to work as quickly as you can! If you have a family, send for them; if you haven't, marry among yourselves without delay. Build yourselves homes. Have children. You will be given a grant for a house and a cow. To work, comrades, to work! Our country needs our timber!"

With this their *comrade* rode off in his motorcar.

It was as a special privilege that they were allowed to marry. In the wretchedly poor settlements on the Kolyma, near Yagodnoye, for instance, Retz recalls that there were women who were not allowed to go to the mainland, yet the MVD forbade exiles to marry them: families would have to be given accommodations.

But not allowing exiles to marry could also be a concession. In Northern Kazakhstan in 1950–1952 some MVD posts tried to tie the exiles down by confronting new arrivals with this stipulation: Marry within two weeks or we'll send you into the interior, into the desert.

It is a curious fact that in many places of exile the camp term "general duties" was used, quite straightforwardly, not as a joke. Because that was what they were—exactly the same as in the camp: the necessary, heartbreaking jobs which ruin a man's health and do not pay a living wage. And though the exiles, as *free men,* were now supposed to work shorter hours, two hours there (to the pit or the logging section) and two back brought their working day up to the camp norm.

The old worker Berezovsky, a trade union leader in the twenties, who had endured ten weary years of exile from 1938, only to be sentenced to ten years in the camps in 1949, tearfully kissed his camp ration in my presence and said happily that he would not perish in the camp, where he had a right to bread. As an exile, even if you go into a shop with money in your pocket and see a loaf on the shelf, they may look you brazenly in the eye, say "No bread!" and sell some to a local while you watch. It is the same with fuel.

The old Petersburg worker Tsivilko (and there is nothing namby-pamby about any of these people) expressed very similar sentiments. He said (in 1951) that after exile he felt like a human being again in a Special Hard Labor Camp: he worked his twelve hours and went back to the huts, whereas in exile the merest

nonentity among the free population could order him (he was a bookkeeper) to work unpaid overtime in the evening or on his day off, or could call on him if he needed any sort of job done privately, and no exile would dare refuse, for fear of dismissal next day.

Nor was life sweet for the ex-prisoner who became a "trusty" in exile. Mitrovich was transferred to Kok-Terek in Dzhambul oblast. (This is how his new life there began. He and a companion were quartered in a donkey stable, which had no windows and was full of dung. They raked the dung away from one wall, made themselves a bed of wormwood, and lay down to sleep.) He was given a job as livestock specialist in the District Agricultural Department. He tried to *serve honestly*—and at once fell foul of the free men in the district Party leadership. The local petty officials were in the habit of taking cows newly in milk from the kolkhoz herd, and replacing them with heifers. They expected Mitrovich to register two-year-old animals as four-year-olds. When he began taking stock carefully, he discovered whole herds which did not belong to the kolkhozes, but were fed and tended by them. It turned out that they were the personal property of the first secretary of the District Party Committee, the chairman of the Executive Committee of the District Soviet, the head of the local tax office, and the militia chief. (Kazakhstan had taken the comfortable road to socialism!) "Just don't put them on the list," they ordered him. But he did. With a zeal for Soviet legality quite bizarre in an exile and ex-prisoner, he even ventured to protest against the appropriation of a gray astrakhan by the chairman of the Executive Committee. He was dismissed—and that was only the beginning of hostilities.

Still, even a district center is not such a bad place of exile. The real hardships of exile began where there was no semblance of a free settlement, beyond the fringe of civilization.

A. Tsivilko, again, tells us of the Zhana Turmys (New Life) kolkhoz in the Western Kazakhstan oblast, where he was from 1937. Before the exiles arrived, the Political Section of the Machine and Tractor Station had warned and indoctrinated the locals: Trotskyites and Counter-Revolutionaries are on the way. The frightened natives would not lend the newcomers so much as a bit of salt, in case they were accused of associating with enemies of the people! During the war, exiles had no bread cards. Our informant worked in a kolkhoz smithy for eight months—and earned a pood of millet. . . . The exiles themselves milled the grain

they received between grindstones made from a sawn-up Kazakh monument. Some went to the NKVD and asked either to be jailed or to be allowed to move to the district center. (Someone may ask: "What about the natives?" Well . . . they're used to it. . . . And if you have a sheep or two, a goat, a cow, a yurt, some crockery —it all helps.)

In the kolkhoz, exiles are always badly off—no regulation clothing, no camp ration. There is no more dreadful place of exile than the kolkhoz. It is a kind of field test: Where is life harder, in the camp or in the kolkhoz?

Here we are at a *sale* of new exiles, S. A. Lifshitz among them, at the Krasnoyarsk Transit Prison. The *buyers* ask for carpenters, and the prison authorities answer: Take a lawyer and a chemist (Lifshitz) as well, and we'll give you your carpenter. Some sick old women are added as makeweight. Then they are all taken on open lorries in a mild 25-degree frost to a village deep, deep in the wilds, a village of three dozen households in all. What can a lawyer do there, or a chemist? Here's an advance to be getting on with: a sack of potatoes, some onions, some flour. (A generous advance, at that!) Money you'll get next year, if you earn it. Your work for the time being is getting the hemp from under the snowdrifts. At first there isn't even a sack to stuff with straw and use for a mattress. Your first impulse is to ask to be released from the kolkhoz! No, it can't be done: the kolkhoz has paid the Administration of Prisons 120 rubles a head (this was in 1952).

If only you could go back to the camp again! . . .

But the reader will err if he concludes that exiles were much better off in state farms than in collective farms. Take the state farm at the village of Minderla in the Sukhobuzim district. There are rows of huts, without a boundary fence, it's true, so that it looks like an open prison camp. Although it is a state farm, money is unknown and there is none in circulation. Instead, they put down meaningless figures: nine rubles (Stalin rubles) per man per day. They also put down how much gruel the man has eaten, and how much should be deducted for his padded jacket and the roof over his head. Deduction after deduction is made until—surprise —when the final account is drawn up the exile has no wage to come, but on the contrary is in debt to the state farm. A. Stotik recalls that two people at this farm hanged themselves in desperation.

(Stotik himself, the visionary, had learned nothing from his

ill-fated attempt to study English in Steplag.[3] When he had taken a good look at his place of exile, he thought he would exercise the constitutional right of a citizen of the U.S.S.R. to . . . education! So he applied for a leave of absence, to go to Krasnoyarsk and *study!* On this impudent application, the like of which the land of exile had probably never seen, the state farm manager [a former raikom secretary] penned something more than a negative decision: a solemn prohibition for the future. "At no time is Stotik to be allowed to study!" However, a chance came his way. The Krasnoyarsk transit point was recruiting carpenters from the exiles in various districts. Stotik, although he was no carpenter, volunteered, went to Krasnoyarsk, where he lived in a hostel with thieves and drunks, and set about preparing for the competitive entrance examination to the Medical Institute. He passed with high marks. He got as far as the Credentials Commission, and still no one had examined his documents thoroughly. "I served at the front," he told them, "then came back and . . ." He dried up. "And what?" Stotik came out with it. "And then . . . I was . . . put in jail." The commission looked black. "But I've *served my sentence! I'm a free man now!* I got high marks!" Stotik insisted. In vain. Yet this was the year of Beria's fall!)

The more remote the farm, the worse things were; the wilder the place, the fewer the exile's rights. A. F. Makeyev, in his previously mentioned notes on Kengir, cites the story told by Aleksandr Vladimirovich Polyakov, the "slave of Turgai," about his exile to a remote pasture in the Turgai wilderness in the interval between two spells in the camps. The only authority there was the kolkhoz chairman, a Kazakh; even the MVD paid no parental visits. Polyakov's living quarters were in the same shed as the sheep, on a litter of straw. His duties—to be the slave of the chairman's four wives, help each of them with her chores and even empty their chamber pots after them. What was Polyakov to do? Leave the grazing ground and complain? Apart from the fact that he had no mount, it would have meant *attempted escape* and twenty years of *katorga.* There was not a single Russian out there. Months went by before a Russian, a tax official, turned up. Polyakov's story astonished him and he offered to pass on a written complaint to the district center. This complaint, treated as a foul libel

3. Part V, Chapter 5.

against the Soviet state, earned Polyakov another stretch in the camps, and he was happily serving his time in Kengir in the fifties. To him it was almost as though he had been released. . . .

And we cannot be sure that the "slave of Turgai" was the most miserable of all exiles.

Nor can we say without qualification that exile, as compared with imprisonment in a camp, has the advantage of providing a settled existence: this is where you live and where you will live, with no fear of transportation. Transports or no transports, an inexplicable and inexorable police order transferring you elsewhere, or the unexpected closure of a particular center or of a whole district to exiles, is an ever-present threat; our informants recall such cases in various localities over the years. Especially during the war—when vigilance was the watchword. All exiles in Taipak district must be ready within twelve hours! And off you go to Dzhembetinsk! Your wretched home, your goods and chattels, so pathetic and to you so precious, the leaky roof you've just mended—leave it all! Forget it! Quick-march, you sturdy beggars! You'll scrape it all together again if you live long enough!

Although life looked so free and easy (they didn't march about in columns, but went each his own way; they did not line up for work assignments; they did not doff their caps; they were not locked in for the night), exile had its own disciplinary code. It was more severe in some places than in others, but it made itself felt everywhere until 1953, when the general relaxation began.

In many places, for instance, exiles had no right to address complaints on civil matters to local government bodies except through the MVD command post, which alone decided whether to let them go forward or snuff them on the spot.

Whenever an MVD officer summoned him, the exile had to leave his work undone, drop whatever he was doing, and report. If you know the ways of the world, you will not need telling that no exile would refuse to carry out a (blackmailing) personal request from a post officer.

The officers in MVD command posts enjoyed a position and rights scarcely inferior to those of officers in camps. Indeed, they had much less to worry about: no restricted area, no guard roster, no hunting runaways, no escorting prisoners to work, none of the business of feeding and clothing a crowd of people. It was enough for them to tick off each name twice a month, and occasionally

initiate a case against those who had broken some rule, as required by the Law. They were despotic, they were lazy, they were self-indulgent (a second lieutenant's pay was 2,000 rubles a month), and so for the most part malevolent creatures.

Escape, properly so called, from Soviet places of exile was almost unknown: the successful escaper would not gain very much in terms of civil freedom—the local free population, living all around him, had after all much the same rights as himself. These were not Tsarist times, when flight from exile easily passed into emigration. Besides, the punishment for running away was no light matter. Escapers were dealt with by a Special Board. Before 1937 it handed out its maximum sentence of five years in prison camp, and from 1937, ten years. After the war, however, a new law—unpublished but universally known—was invariably applied: the inordinately cruel penalty for running away from a place of exile was now *twenty years of katorga!*

Local MVD posts introduced their own interpretations of what should or should not be considered attempted escape, drew for themselves the forbidden line which the exile must not cross, decided whether or not he could go off to gather firewood or pick mushrooms. In Khakassiya, for instance, in the Ordzhonikidzevsky mining settlement, the ruling was that "uphill" absenteeism (into mountain country) counted as a mere breach of discipline punishable with five years in a camp, while "downhill" absenteeism (in the direction of the railway) was attempted escape, punishable with twenty years of *katorga.* This unpardonable leniency took such a hold on the settlement that when a group of Armenian exiles, driven to despair by the high-handedness of the mine management, went to the district center to complain—naturally without permission from the MVD post to absent themselves for this purpose—they got a mere six years for their *attempted escape.*

What were classified as attempts to escape were more often than not misinterpreted absences of this sort. These, and the ingenuous mistakes of older people who could not get the hang of our savage system and adapt themselves to it.

One Greek woman, more than eighty years old, was banished from Simferopol to the Urals toward the end of the war. When the war ended her son returned to Simferopol and she naturally went to live secretly with him. In 1949, now eighty-seven (!) years old, she was arrested, sentenced to twenty years' hard labor

(87 + 20 = ?), and transported to Ozerlag. Another old woman, also Greek, was well known in the Dzhambul oblast. When the Greeks were deported from the Kuban she was taken, together with two grown-up daughters, while her third daughter, who was married to a Russian, remained behind. The old woman lived awhile, and awhile longer, in exile, and decided to go home to this daughter to die. This was an "escape," punishable with hard labor for twenty years! In Kok-Terek we had a physiologist called Aleksei Ivanovich Bogoslovsky. He had benefited from the "Adenauer amnesty"* of 1955—but not in full: the period of exile was left in force, although it should not have been. He started sending in appeals and petitions, but this was a lengthy business, and in the meantime his mother, in Perm, who had not seen him in fourteen years, since he had gone off to the war and a prisoner-of-war camp, was going blind and longed to see him before her eyesight failed altogether. Risking hard labor, Bogoslovsky decided to visit her and be back within a week. He invented an official trip for himself to grazing lands out in the wilds, and boarded a train for Novosibirsk. No one in the district had noticed his absence, but in Novosibirsk a vigilant taximan reported him to the secret police, who asked to see his papers, and since he had none he had to make a clean breast. He was sent back to our clay-walled prison in Kok-Terek, and interrogation was under way when suddenly a ruling arrived that he was not to be treated as an exile. As soon as he was released he went to his mother. But he was too late.

We should paint a very inadequate picture of the Soviet exile system if we did not recall that in every district to which exiles were sent an Operations Department kept unsleeping watch, pulled in exiles for *little talks,* recruited informers, collected denunciations, and used them to pin *fresh sentences* on people. For the time was never far off when the isolated individual exile would exchange his monotonous and static existence for the animated congestion of the camps. A *second extension*—reinvestigation and a new sentence—was for many the natural *end of exile.*

If Pyotr Viksne had not deserted from the reactionary bourgeois Latvian army in 1922 and run away to the free Soviet Union, had he not been exiled in 1934 to Kazakhstan for corresponding with relatives still in Latvia (who came to no harm at all), yet refused to be downhearted, had he not worked indefatigably in exile as an engine driver at the Ayaguza depot and earned Stakhanovite status—on December 3, 1937, posters would not have been put up

at the depot saying: "Model yourselves on Comrade Viksne!" and on December 4 Comrade Viksne would not have been put inside for an "extension of sentence," from which he was never to return.

In exile as in the camps, resentencing went on continually, to show them *up there* that the Operations Departments never slept. There, as elsewhere, *intensive methods* were used, to help the prisoner understand his fate more quickly and submit more unreservedly. (Tsivilko was put in the hole at Uralsk in 1937 for thirty-two days, and had six teeth knocked out.) But there were also special periods, as for instance in 1948, when a close-meshed net was cast in all places of exile, and either all exiles without exception were fished out for transportation to the camps, as at Vorkuta ("Vorkuta is becoming an industrial center and Comrade Stalin has given instructions to clean it up"), or else, in some other places, all males.

But even for those who did not land in jail for an extended sentence, the "end of exile" was a nebulous idea. Thus, on the Kolyma, where "release" from a camp meant no more than transfer from the care of the camp guardhouse to that of the special MVD post, there was, strictly speaking, no "end of exile" either, because there was no exit from the area. Those who did manage to break away and go to the mainland in the brief periods when it was permitted probably never stopped cursing their fate: on the mainland they were all sentenced to fresh spells in the camps.

The sky of exile, troubled enough without it, was continually darkened by the shadow of the Operations Department. Under the eye of the secret police, at the mercy of informers, continually working himself to the verge of collapse in the struggle to earn bread for his children—the exile lived a very isolated life, the life of a timorous recluse. There were none of those long intimate conversations, those confessions of things past, usual in prisons and camps.

That is why it is difficult to collect stories about life in exile.

The Soviet exile system has also left almost nothing in the way of photographs: the only photographs taken were meant for documents—for personnel departments and Special Sections. If a group of exiles had their photographs taken together . . . what could it mean? What it would certainly mean was immediate denunciation to the security authorities: There you are—our local underground anti-Soviet organization. They would use the snapshot to arrest the lot.

Exile in our day has left behind none of those rather jolly group photographs—you know the sort: third from the left Ulyanov, second on the right Krzhizhanovsky. All well fed, all neatly dressed, knowing neither toil nor want, every last beard tidily trimmed, every single cap of good fur.

Those, my children, were very dark times. . . .

Chapter 4

■

Nations in Exile

Historians may correct us, but no instance from the nineteenth century, or the eighteenth, or the seventeenth, of forcible resettlement of whole peoples has lodged in the average man's memory. There were colonial conquests—on the South Sea Islands, in Africa, in Asia, in the Caucasus, the conquerors obtained power over the indigenous population—but somehow it did not enter the immature minds of the colonizers to sever the natives from the land which had been theirs of old, from their ancestral homes. Only the export of Negroes to the American plantations gives us perhaps some semblance, some anticipation of it, but there was no developed state system at work here: only individual Christian slave traders, in whose breasts the sudden revelation of huge gains lit a roaring fire of greed, so that they rushed to hunt down, to inveigle, to buy Negroes, singly or by the dozen, each on his own account.

Only when the twentieth century—on which all civilized mankind had put its hopes—arrived, only when the National Question had reached the summit of its development thanks to the One and Only True Doctrine, could the supreme authority on that Question patent the wholesale extirpation of peoples by banishment within forty-eight hours, within twenty-four hours, or even within an hour and a half.

Even to *Him,* of course, the answer did not become clear quite so suddenly. He once even committed himself to the incautious view that "there never has been and never can be an instance of anyone in the U.S.S.R. becoming an object of persecution because

of his national origin."[1] In the twenties all those minority languages were encouraged; it was endlessly dinned into the Crimea that it was Tatar, Tatar, and nothing but Tatar; it even had the Arabic alphabet, and all the signs were in Tatar.

Then it turned out that this was . . . all a mistake.

Even when he had finished compressing the exiled peasant mass, the Great Helmsman did not immediately realize how conveniently this method could be applied to nations. His sovereign brother Hitler's experiment in the extirpation of Jews and Gypsies came late, when the Second World War had already begun, but Father Stalin had given thought to the problem earlier.

After the peasant Plague, and until the banishment of peoples, the land of exile could not begin to compare with the camps; although it handled hundreds of thousands, it was not so glorious and populous that the highroad of history lay through it. There were *exile settlers* (sentenced by the courts) and there were *administrative exiles* (untried), but both these groups consisted of persons individually registered, each with his own name, year of birth, articles of indictment, photographs full face and in profile; and only the Organs with their miraculous patience and their readiness for anything could weave a rope from these particles of sand, build a monolithic colony in each of their districts from the wreckage of so many families.

The business of banishment was immeasurably improved and speeded up when they drove the first *special settlers* into exile. The two earlier terms (exile settler and administrative exile) were from the Tsar's times, but *spetspereselenets* (special settler) was Soviet, our very own. *Spets*— so many of our favorite, our most precious words begin with this little prefix (special section, special assignment, special communications system, special rations, special sanatorium). In the year of the Great Break they designated the dekulakized as "special settlers"—and this made for much greater flexibility and efficiency; it left no grounds for appeal since it was not only kulaks who were dekulakized. Call them "special settlers," and no one can wriggle free.

Then the Great Father gave orders that this word be applied to banished nations.

Even *He* was slow to realize the value of his discovery. His first experiment was very cautious. In 1937 some tens of thousands of

1. Stalin, *Sochineniya (Works),* Moscow, 1951, Vol. 13, p. 258.

those suspicious Koreans—with Khalkhin-Gol in mind, face to face with Japanese imperialism, who could trust those slant-eyed heathens?—from palsied old men to puling infants, with some portion of their beggarly belongings, were swiftly and quietly transferred from the Far East to Kazakhstan. So swiftly that they spent the first winter in mud-brick houses without windows (where would all that glass have come from!). And so quietly that nobody except the neighboring Kazakhs learned of this resettlement, no one who counted let slip a word about it, no foreign correspondent uttered a squeak. (Now you see why the whole press must be in the hands of the proletariat.)

He liked it. He remembered it. And in 1940 the same method was applied on the outskirts of Leningrad, cradle of the Revolution. But this time the banished were not taken at night and at bayonet point. Instead, it was called a "triumphal send-off" to the (newly conquered) Karelo-Finnish Republic. At high noon, with red flags flapping and brass bands braying, the Leningrad Finns and Estonians were dispatched to settle their new native soil. When they had been taken a bit farther from civilization (V.A.M. tells us what befell a party of some six hundred people), they were all relieved of their passports, put under guard, and carried forward, first in red prison boxcars, then by barge. At the harbor of their destination deep in Karelia, they were broken up into small groups and sent to "reinforce the collective farms." And these completely free citizens, fresh from their triumphal send-off . . . submitted. Only twenty-six rebels, our narrator among them, refused to go, and what is more, would not surrender their passports! A representative of Soviet power—in this case, the Council of People's Commissars of the Karelo-Finnish Republic—had also arrived and he warned them: "There will be casualties." "Will you turn machine guns on us?" they shouted back. Silly fellows —why machine *guns?* There they were, surrounded by guards, all in a bunch; a single barrel would have been enough for them (and nobody would have written poems about those *twenty-six* Finns!).* But a strange spinelessness, sluggishness, or reluctance to take responsibility prevented the carrying out of this sensible measure. In an attempt to separate them, they were told to report to the security officer singly—but all twenty-six answered the summons together. And their senseless obstinacy and courage prevailed! They were allowed to keep their passports and the cordon was removed. In this way they resisted falling to the level

of collective farmers or exiles. But theirs was an exceptional case, and the great majority handed over their passports.

These were mere trial runs. Only in July, 1941, did the time come to test the method at full power: the autonomous and of course traitorous republic of the Volga Germans (with its twin capitals, Engels and Marxstadt) had to be expunged and its population hurled somewhere well to the East in a matter of days. Here for the first time the dynamic method of exiling whole peoples was applied in all its purity, and how much easier, how much more rewarding it proved to use a single criterion—that of nationality —rather than all those individual interrogations, and decrees each naming a single person. As for the Germans seized in other parts of Russia (and every last one was gathered in), local NKVD officers had no need of higher education to determine whether a man was an enemy or not. If the name's German—grab him.

The system had been proved and perfected, and henceforward would fasten its pitiless talons on any nation pointed out to it, designated and doomed as treacherous—and more adroitly every time: the Chechens; the Ingush; the Karachai; the Balkars; the Kalmyks; the Kurds; the Crimean Tatars; and finally, the Caucasian Greeks. What made the system particularly effective was that the decision taken by the Father of the Peoples was made known to a particular people not in the form of verbose legal proceedings, but by means of a military operation carried out by modern motorized infantry. Armed divisions enter the doomed people's locality by night and occupy key positions. The criminal nation wakes up and sees every settlement ringed with machine guns and automatic rifles. And they are given twelve hours (but that is a long time for the wheels of motorized infantry units to stop turning, and in the Crimea it was sometimes only two or even one and a half hours) to get ready whatever each of them can carry in his hands. Then each of them is made to sit cross-legged in the back of a lorry, like a prisoner (old women, mothers with babies at the breast: sit down, all of you; you heard the order!), and the lorries travel under escort to the railway station. From there prison trains take them to a new place. From which they may still have to make their way like Volga boatmen (as the Crimean Tatars did up the river Unzha—what more suitable place for them than those northern marshes?), towing rafts on which gray-bearded old men lie motionless, 150 to 200 kilometers against the current, into the wild forest (above Kologrivo).

From the air or from high up in the mountains it was probably a magnificent sight. The whole Crimean peninsula (newly liberated in April, 1944) echoed with the hum of engines and hundreds of motorized columns crawled snakelike, on and on along roads straight and crooked. The trees were just in full bloom. Tatar women were lugging boxes of spring onions from hothouses to bed them out in the gardens. The tobacco planting was just beginning. (And that was where it ended. Tobacco vanished from the Crimea for many years to come.) The motorized columns did not go right up to the settlements, but stayed at the road junctions while detachments of special troops encircled villages. Their orders were to allow the inhabitants an hour and a half to get ready, but political officers cut this down, sometimes to as little as forty minutes, to get it over with more quickly and be on time at the assembly point—and so that richer pickings would be lying around for the detachment of the task force to be left behind in the village. Hardened villages like Ozenbash, near Lake Biyuk, had to be burned to the ground. The motorized columns took the Tatars to the stations, and there they went on waiting in their trains for days on end, wailing, and singing mournful songs of farewell.[2]

Neatness and uniformity! That is the advantage of exiling whole nations at once! No special cases! No exceptions, no individual protests! They all go quietly, because . . . they're all in it together. All ages and both sexes go, and that still leaves something to be said. Those still in the womb go, too, and are exiled unborn, by the same decree. Yes, children not yet conceived go into exile, for it is their lot to be conceived under the high hand of the same decree; and from the very day of their birth, whatever that obsolete and tiresome Article 35 of the Criminal Code may say ("Sentence of exile cannot be passed on persons under 16 years of age"), from the moment they thrust their heads out into the light they will be special settlers, exiles in perpetuity. Their coming of age, their sixteenth birthdays, will be marked only by the first of their regular outings to report at the MVD post.

All that the exiles have left behind them—their houses, wide open and still warm, their belongings lying in disorder, the home

2. In the 1860s the landowners and the administration of Tavrida Province petitioned the government to expel all the Crimean Tatars to Turkey. Alexander II refused. In 1943 the Gauleiter of the Crimea made the same request. Hitler refused.

put together and improved by ten or even twenty generations—passes without differentiation to the agents of the punitive organs, then some of it to the state, some to neighbors belonging to more fortunate nations, and nobody will write to complain about the loss of a cow, a piece of furniture, or some crockery.

One final thing made the principle of uniformity absolute, raised it to the height of perfection—the secret decree did not spare even members of the Communist Party in the ranks of these worthless nations. No need then to check Party cards—another relief. Besides, the Communists could be made to work twice as hard as the rest in their new place of exile, and everybody would be satisfied.[3]

The only crack in the principle of uniformity was made by mixed marriages (not for nothing has our socialist state always been against them). When the Germans, and later the Greeks, were exiled, spouses belonging to other nationalities were not sent with them. But this caused a great deal of confusion, and left foci of infection in places supposedly sterilized. (Like those old Greek women who came home to their children to die.)

Where were the exiled nations sent? Kazakhstan was much favored—and there, together with the ordinary exiles, they formed more than half the republic's population, so that it could aptly be called Ka-*zek*-stan. But Central Asia, Siberia (where very many Kalmyks perished along the Yenisei), the Northern Urals, and the Northern European areas of the U.S.S.R. all received their fair share.

Should we, or should we not, regard the expulsions from the Baltic States as "deportation of nations"? They do not satisfy the formal requirements. The Balts were not deported wholesale: as nations they appeared to remain in their old homes. (It would have been so nice to move them all—but they were a little too close to Europe!) They appeared to be where they had been—but they were thinned out, their best people were removed.

The purge started early: back in 1940, as soon as our troops marched in, and even before those overjoyed peoples had voted

3. Of course, not even the Great Helmsman could foresee all the strange twists of history. In 1929 the Tatar princes and other high personages were expelled from the Crimea. This was done less harshly than in Russia: they were not arrested, but allowed to make their own way to Central Asia. There, among the local inhabitants, Moslems themselves, and kinsmen, they gradually settled down and made themselves comfortable. Then fifteen years later all the Tatar toilers came under the nit comb and were sent to the same place! Old acquaintances met again. Only the toilers were traitors and exiles, whereas their former princes had safe jobs in the local government apparatus, and many were in the Party.

unanimously in favor of joining the Soviet Union. Culling began with the officers. We must try to imagine what this first (and last) generation of native officers meant to these young states. They were not Baltic barons, not arrogant drones, but all that was most serious, most responsible, most energetic in these nations. While they were still schoolboys they had learned in the snows of Narva to shield a still infant country with their still childish frames. Now all this rich experience was mowed down with one sweep of the scythe. This was a very important part of the preparations for the plebiscite. The recipe was of course well tried—had not the very same thing been done in the Soviet Union proper? Quietly and speedily destroy those who might take the lead in resistance, and also those who might awaken resistance with their thoughts, their speeches, their books—and it will seem that the people is whole and in place, yet the people will be no more. Externally, a dead tooth looks for a while exactly like a live one.

But for the Baltic States in 1940, it was not exile, but the camps —or for some people, death by shooting in stone-walled prison yards. In 1941, again, as the Soviet armies retreated, they seized as many well-to-do, influential, and prominent people as they could, and carried or drove them off like precious trophies, and then tipped them like dung onto the frostbound soil of the Archipelago. (The arrests were invariably made at night, only 100 kilograms of baggage was allowed for a whole family, and heads of families were segregated as they boarded the train, for imprisonment and destruction.) Thereafter, the Baltic States were threatened (over Leningrad radio) with ruthless punishment and vengeance throughout the war. When they returned in 1944 the victors carried out their threats, and imprisoned people in droves. But even this was not deportation of whole nations.

The main epidemics of banishment hit the Baltic States in 1948 (the recalcitrant Lithuanians), in 1949 (all three nations), and in 1951 (the Lithuanians again). In these same years the Western Ukraine, too, was being scraped clean, and there, too, the last deportations took place in 1951.

Was the Generalissimo preparing to exile some national group in 1953? The Jews, perhaps? And who else besides? Perhaps the whole of the Right Bank Ukraine? We shall never know what his great scheme was. I suspect, for instance, that Stalin suffered from an unquenchable longing to exile all Finland to the wilderness on the Chinese border—but he had no luck either in 1940 or in 1947

(Leino's attempted coup). He could have found just the spot for the Serbs—say, beyond the Urals—or for the Greeks of the Peloponnese.

If this Fourth Pillar of the Vanguard Doctrine had stood another ten years, we should not recognize the ethnic maps of Eurasia. There would have been a great countermigration of the peoples.

For every nation exiled, an epic will someday be written—on its separation from its native land, and its destruction in Siberia. Only the nations themselves can voice their feelings about all they have lived through: we have no words to speak for them, and we must not get under their feet.

But to help the reader recognize that this is still the land of exile, which he has visited before, the same place of pollution adjoining the same Archipelago, let us look a little further into the deportation of the Baltic peoples.

The deportation of the Balts, far from being a violation of the sovereign will of the people, was carried out purely and simply in execution of it. In each of the three republics, its very own Council of Ministers freely reached the decision (in Estonia it was dated November 25, 1948) to deport certain specified categories of its fellow countrymen to distant and alien Siberia—and what is more, in perpetuity, never to return to their native land. (In this we see distinctly both the independence of the Baltic governments, and the exasperation to which their worthless and deplorable fellow countrymen had brought them.) These categories were: (*a*) the families of persons previously condemned (it was not enough that the fathers were perishing in prison camps; their whole stock had to be extirpated); (*b*) prosperous peasants (this greatly speeded up the now essential process of collectivization in the Baltic States) and all members of their families (students in Riga, and their parents on the farm, were picked up on the same night); (*c*) people who were in any way conspicuous, important in their own right, yet had somehow jumped over the nit comb in 1940, 1941, and 1944; (*d*) families who were simply hostile to the regime, but had not been quick enough to escape to Scandinavia, or were personally disliked by local activists.

So as not to injure the dignity of our great common Motherland, and gratify our Western *enemies,* this decree was not published in the newspapers, was not promulgated in the republics, was re-

vealed even to the exiles themselves not at the moment of deportation but only on arrival at MVD posts in Siberia.

In the years which had passed since the deportation of the Koreans, or even that of the Crimean Tatars, the organization of such operations had improved to such a degree, the precious experience gained had been so widely spread and thoroughly assimilated, that they no longer counted in days or even hours, but in minutes. Practice proved that twenty or thirty minutes was time enough between the first bang on the door at night and the last scrape of the householder's heel on his threshold as he walked into the darkness and toward the lorry. Those few minutes gave the awakened family time to dress, take in the news that they were being exiled for life, sign a document waiving all property claims, collect their old women and children, get their bundles together, and leave their homes when the order was given. (Property left behind was dealt with in an orderly fashion. After the escort troops had left, representatives of the Tax Office arrived to draw up a list of confiscated items, which were then sold through commission shops for the benefit of the state. We have no right to reproach them if they stuffed some things under their coats, and "offloaded" others, while they were about it. They had no real need to do so. It was only necessary to get an extra receipt from the commission shop, and any representative of the people's power could quite legally carry home the article he had bought for a song.)

How could anyone think clearly in those twenty or thirty minutes? How could they decide what it would be most useful to take with them? The lieutenant who was evicting one family (a seventy-five-year-old grandmother, a fifty-year-old mother, a daughter of eighteen, and a son of twenty) advised them to "take your sewing machine, whatever you do!" Who would ever have thought of it! But later on that sewing machine fed the family—and without it they would have starved.[4]

Sometimes, however, the speed of the operation worked to the advantage of the victims. A whirlwind blew up—and was gone. Even the best broom leaves specks behind. If some woman managed to hang on for three days, spent the nights away from

4. These MVD troops—how much did they understand of what they were doing, and what did they think of it? Mariya Sumberg was deported by a Siberian soldier from the river Chulym. He was demobilized shortly after, went home, saw her there, grinned delightedly, and hailed her effusively: "Hello, there! Remember me? . . ."

home, then went to the Tax Office and asked them to unseal her apartment—well, sometimes they would. All right, damn you—live there till next time.

In small cattle cars, intended for the transport of eight horses, or thirty-two soldiers, or forty prisoners, they carried fifty or more exiled Talinners. They were in too much of a hurry to equip the cattle cars, and did not give immediate permission to hack holes in the floors. The old bucket in which the exiles relieved themselves was soon brimful, running over and splashing their belongings. From the first minute these two-legged mammals were made to forget that men and women are different. They were shut up for a day and a half without food and without water. A child died. (But of course, we read all this not so very long ago, didn't we? Two chapters ago, twenty years back—but nothing has changed. . . .) They stood for a long time in the station at Julemiste, with people running up and down outside, banging on the sides of the cars, asking for friends and relatives by name, unsuccessfully trying to pass provisions and comforts to one or another of them. These people were chased away. While those locked in the boxcars went hungry. And Siberia awaited its lightly clad guests.

The authorities began issuing bread on the journey, and at certain stations soup. All the trains had a long haul before them: to the provinces of Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk. Barabinsk alone was the destination of fifty-two carloads of Estonians. Exiles to Achinsk were fourteen days on the way.

What can sustain people on such a desperate journey? The hope which is brought not by faith but by hatred: "Their end is near! There will be war this year, and we shall go home in the autumn."

No one who has not experienced such misfortune, either in the Western or in the Eastern world, can be expected to understand or sympathize with or perhaps even forgive the mood of those behind bars at that time. I have said already that we, too, had the same beliefs, the same yearnings, in those years, 1949–1950. These were the years in which the iniquity of the system, with its twenty-five-year sentences, and its *return trips* to the Archipelago, reached a new, explosive level, became so glaringly intolerable that its guardians could no longer defend it. (Let us put it generally: if a regime is immoral, its subjects are free from all obligations to it.) Only by savagely mutilating their lives could you make thousands of thousands in cells, in prison vans and prison trains,

pray for a devastating atomic war as their only way out!

But no one wept—no one. Hatred is dry-eyed.

Another thing the Estonians thought about on the journey was the reception they could expect from the people of Siberia. In 1940 the Siberians had stripped exiled Balts bare, bullied them into handing over their belongings, paid half a bucket of potatoes for a fur coat. (We were, of course, all so ill-clad in those days that the Balts really did look like bourgeois. . . .)

Now, in 1949, the word was put around in Siberia that those who were being brought were incorrigible kulaks. But these kulaks were dumped out of their cattle cars in rags and near the end of their endurance. At medical examinations Russian nurses were amazed that the women were so thin and so shabby, that they hadn't a clean rag for their babes. The new arrivals were sent to kolkhozes short of people—and there the peasant women of collectivized Siberia, keeping it a secret from their bosses, brought them whatever they could spare: half a liter of milk from one, a griddlecake made of sugar-beet pulp or very bad flour from another.

Now, at last, the Estonian women wept.

But there were also, of course, the Komsomol activists. They took the arrival of this Fascist rabble very much to heart ("They should drown the lot of you!" such people shouted), and greatly resented their reluctance to work—ingrates!—for the country which had liberated them from bourgeois slavery. These Komsomols were given the task of supervising the exiles and their work. And they were warned: at the first shot they should organize a roundup.

At Achinsk station there was an amusing mix-up. The Birilyussi district bosses *bought* from the convoy ten wagonloads of exiles, five hundred people or so, for their collective farms on the river Chulym, and briskly shifted them 150 kilometers to the north. They had in fact been assigned to the Saralinsk mining administration, in Khakassiya (but of course did not know it). The mine managers were awaiting their *contingent,* but the contingent had been sprinkled about collective farms in which the year before peasants had received 200 grams of grain for a workday. By that spring there was neither grain nor potatoes, the villages were loud with the bellowing of hungry cattle, and the cows flung themselves like mad things on half-rotted straw. So it was not out of malice or to keep the exiles on a tight rein that the collective farms gave

these newcomers one kilogram of flour per person per week—that was a very respectable advance, almost equivalent to their total future earnings! For the Estonians it was an appalling change from their homeland. . . . (There were, in fact, big barns full of grain in a nearby settlement called Polevoy: stocks had mounted up from year to year because nobody had made arrangements to remove them. But this was now state grain, and the kolkhoz had no claim to it. The people all around were dying, but no grain from those barns was given to them: it belonged to the state. On one occasion, kolkhoz chairman Pashkov took matters into his own hands and issued five kilograms to each kolkhoznik still living—and was sentenced to the camps as a result. The grain belonged to the state; the kolkhoz's troubles were its own affair—and this is not the book in which to discuss them.)

There on the Chulym the Estonians lived a life of desperation, trying to master an astounding new law: *Steal or die.* They had begun to think that they were there *forever,* when suddenly they were all plucked out and driven off to the Saralinsk district of Khakassiya (the owners had found their missing contingent). There were no actual Khakassians to be seen there; every settlement was a place of exile, and in every settlement there was an MVD post. There were gold mines, new shafts being sunk, silicosis everywhere. (Indeed, these broad expanses were not so much part of Khakassiya, or the Krasnoyarsk region, as the territory of Khakzoloto [the Khakassian Gold Mining Trust] or Yeniseistroi [the Yenisei Development Authority]; they belonged not to the District Soviets and District Party Committees but to the generals of MVD troops, and the secretaries of District Party Committees truckled to the local MVD commanders.)

But those who were simply sent to the mines did not have the worst of it. Much worse off were those who were enrolled in "prospecting artels." *Prospectors!* It has a romantic ring. The word glistens as though lightly dusted with gold. But any idea you like to think of can be given an ugly twist in our country. Special settlers were forced into these artels because they dared not object. They were sent to work mines which the state had abandoned as unprofitable. There were no longer any safety measures in these mines, and water ran in continually as though it were raining heavily. The yield was low, however hard you worked, and it was impossible to earn a decent wage; these dying people were simply sent in to lick out the residual traces of gold which the state was

too miserly to abandon. The teams came under the "Prospecting Sector" of the Mining Administration, which thought of nothing, recognized no obligation, except to hand down the plan and exact fulfillment. The artels were "free" not from the state, but only from the benefits of its legislation: they were not entitled to paid leave, nor as a matter of course to Sundays off (as even zeks in the camps were), since any month might be declared a "Stakhanov" month, with never a Sunday in it. The state's rights were preserved: a man who did not turn up for work was put on trial. Once every two months a people's judge arrived and condemned several exiles to 25 percent compulsory labor—there were always plenty of excuses. These "prospectors" earned 3–4 "gold" rubles (150–200 Stalin rubles) *per month.*

At certain mines near Kopyov the exiles were paid not in money but in *vouchers;* what need had they, in fact, of ordinary Soviet currency when they could not move around anyway, and the shop at the mine would accept payment in coupons as well?

Elsewhere in this book we have developed in detail the comparison between prisoners in the camps and peasants in the days of serfdom. But if we remember our Russian history we know that the hardest conditions were those not of the peasants, but of workers tied to factories. These vouchers expendable only in the mine shops bring memories of the gold mines and factories of the Altai flooding into our minds. The miners assigned to these enterprises in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries deliberately committed crimes in order to get into *katorga,* and *have an easier life of it.* Even at the end of the last century workers in the Altai goldfields "had no right to refuse work even on Sunday" (!), they paid fines (cf. the compulsory labor system), and there were shops with poor-quality provisions, cheap drink, and short measure. "These shops, and not the incompetently conducted mining operations, were the main source of income for the gold mine owners"[5] —or, in modern terms, the Trust.

Strange that everything on the Archipelago should be so unoriginal! . . .

In 1952, Kh. S., a frail little woman, did not go to work in a hard frost because she had no felt boots. For this, the head of the woodworking artel sent her logging for three months—still without felt boots. Three months before childbirth she asked to be

5. Semyonov-Tyan-Shansky, *Rossiya (Russia)* (1899–1914), Vol. XVI.

given some lighter work than heaving logs, and the answer was: If you don't want the job, give it up. Then a benighted woman doctor got the date of her confinement wrong by a month, and did not send her on leave until two or three days before she had her child. Argument will get you nowhere out in the MVD's taiga.

But even there life was not wrecked beyond repair. Total ruin was an experience reserved for those special settlers who were sent to collective farms. There are people nowadays who debate (and it is not a foolish argument) whether life was really any easier in the kolkhoz than in the camps. But what, we may answer, if kolkhoz and camp are combined? Well, that was the position of the special settler in the kolkhoz. It was a kolkhoz to the extent that there were no regular rations: only at sowing time did they issue 700 grams of grain a day, and then it was half-rotten, mixed with sand, earth-colored (no doubt swept up from the floor of the barns). It was like a prison camp in that the settlers could be put in detention cells: if a foreman complained about one of the exiles in his gang, the kolkhoz management would telephone the MVD post, and the MVD would take the man inside. There was no way of picking up extra earnings—you couldn't possibly make ends meet: for her first year of work in the kolkhoz Mariya Sumberg got *twenty grams* of grain per workday (a little bird can find more hopping along the roadside) and fifteen Stalin kopecks (one and a half Khrushchev kopecks). With her earnings for a whole year she bought herself . . . an aluminum bowl.

What, you may ask, did they live on?! Why, on parcels from the Baltic States. Their people had been banished—but not the whole people.

But who was there to send the Kalmyks parcels? Or the Crimean Tatars? . . .

Walk among their graves and ask them.

Whether this, too, was part of the decision made by their own Baltic governments, or an example of Siberian correctness, special instructions concerning the Baltic exiles were observed until 1953, until the Father of the Peoples was no more: no work for them except the heaviest! Only the pick, the shovel, and the saw! *"You are here to become real human beings!"* If a management promoted someone, the MVD post would intervene and remove him for *general duties.* They would not even allow special settlers to dig the gardens at the Mining Administration's Rest Home—for fear of offending the Stakhanovites who were recuperating there.

The MVD post commander even had M. Sumberg dismissed from the post of calf-herd: "You haven't been sent here for your summer holidays—go and stack hay!" The chairman had the greatest difficulty in keeping her. (She had saved his calves from brucellosis. She had become very fond of Siberian cattle, which she found better-natured than Estonian beasts, and cows who were unused to kindness licked her hands.)

Grain suddenly had to be loaded onto barges in a hurry—and special settlers worked without pay or reward for thirty-six hours on end (Chulym). In that whole period there were two breaks of twenty minutes each for food and one rest period of three hours. "Either you do it or we'll send you farther north!" If an old man fell down under the weight of a sack, the Komsomol overseers kicked him up again.

Settlers had to report weekly. The MVD post is several kilometers away, you say? And the old woman is eighty? Get a horse and carry her in! Every time they reported, they were reminded that attempted escape meant twenty years hard labor.

The security officer's room is next door. Exiles are called in there, too. The bait of a better job is dangled. And they threaten to deport an only daughter beyond the Arctic Circle, separating her from her family.

Is there anything they can not do? At what forbidden limit was their hand ever stayed by conscience? . . .

They gave the exiles tasks to perform. Keep an eye on such-and-such. Gather the evidence which will imprison so-and-so.

If the merest sergeant from the command post entered a hut, all the exiles, even aged women, had to rise and remain standing unless permission to sit was given.

. . . I hope that the reader has not misunderstood me to mean that exiles were deprived of their civil rights . . .

Oh, no, no! Their civil rights were preserved intact! Their passports were not taken from them. They were not deprived of the right to participate in elections on a universal, equal, secret, and direct ballot. That supreme, that glorious moment—when you strike out all the candidates on a list except the one of your choice—was jealously preserved for them. Nor were they forbidden to subscribe to the state loan (remember what torments the Communist Dyakov suffered in the camp!). When *free* kolkhozniki, cursing and grumbling, grudgingly gave 50 rubles, 400 each were

wrung out of the Estonians. "You're all rich. If anybody doesn't sign we won't let him have his parcels. And we'll move him farther north."

They would do it, too. What was to stop them?

The tedium of it all! Nothing but the same thing over and over again. At the beginning of this Part VI we appeared to be discussing something new: not the camps, but the exile system. And this chapter made a fresh start: our theme was no longer the administrative exiles, but the special settlers.

Yet we are back where we started.

Must we—and if so, how often must we repeat ourselves again and again and again—tell the story of other, and different, exile colonies? In other places? At other periods? Peopled by other exiled nations?

And if so, which? . . .

■

Groups of exiles belonging to different nationalities, interspersed and clearly visible to each other, displayed their own national characteristics, their own ways of life, their own special tastes and inclinations.

Far and away the most industrious were the Germans. They had hacked themselves free of their past lives more resolutely than any of the others (and what sort of homeland had they had on the Volga or the Manych?). As once they had rooted themselves in Catherine's fecund allotments, so now they put down roots in the harsh and barren soil Stalin had given, abandoned themselves to this new land of exile as their final home. They began settling in, not temporarily, until the next amnesty, the first act of clemency by the Tsar, but forever. They had been exiled in 1941 with not a stick or a stitch, but they were good husbandmen and indefatigable, they did not fall into despondency, and even in this place set to work as methodically and sensibly as ever. Is there any wilderness on earth which Germans could not turn into a land of plenty? Not for nothing did Russians say in the old days that "a German is like a willow tree—stick it in anywhere and it will take." In the mines, in Machine and Tractor Stations, in state farms, wherever it might be, the bosses could not find words enough to praise the Germans—they had never had better workers. By the fifties the

Germans—in comparison with other exiles and even with the locals—had the stoutest, roomiest, and neatest houses, the biggest pigs, the best milch cows. Their daughters grew up to be much-sought-after brides, not only because their parents were well off, but—in the depraved world around the camps—because of their purity and strict morals.

The Greeks, too, ardently embraced their work. Although they never stopped dreaming about the Kuban, they grudged no effort in this new place either. Compared with the Germans, they lived in rather cramped quarters, but they soon caught up with them in the number of their cows and the richness of their gardens. In the little marketplaces of Kazakhstan it was the Greeks who had the best cream cheese, the best butter, the best vegetables.

The Koreans prospered even more in Kazakhstan—but of course they had been exiled earlier, and by the fifties were already in large measure emancipated from serfdom: they were no longer required to report, and they traveled freely from oblast to oblast, provided they did not cross the borders of the republic. They did not excel as good home builders or husbandmen (their homes and steadings were uncomfortable and primitive until the younger people became Europeanized); but they responded very well to education, quickly filled the educational institutions of Kazakhstan (no one put obstacles in their way during the war), and became the main component of the educated stratum in the republic.

Other nations, secretly cherishing dreams of return, were incapable of such single-mindedness, of living wholly in the present. But as a rule they submitted to discipline, and gave the MVD little trouble.

The Kalmyks could not stand up to it, and grieved themselves to death. (Here, however, I cannot speak from observation.)

But there was one nation which would not give in, would not acquire the mental habits of submission—and not just individual rebels among them, but the whole nation to a man. These were the Chechens.

We have already seen how they behaved toward runaways from the camps. And how they alone among the exiles at Dzhezkazgan tried to support the Kengir rising.

I would say that of all the special settlers, the Chechens alone showed themselves zeks in spirit. They had been treacherously snatched from their home, and from that day they believed in

nothing. They built themselves sakli—low, dark, miserable huts that looked as if you could kick them over. Their husbandry in exile was all of this sort—all just for a day, a month, a year, with nothing put by, no reserves, no thought for the future. They ate and drank, and the young people even dressed up. The years went by—and they owned just as little as they had to begin with. The Chechens never sought to please, to ingratiate themselves with the bosses; their attitude was always haughty and indeed openly hostile. They treated the laws on universal education and the state curriculum with contempt, and to save them from corruption would not send their little girls to school, nor indeed all of their boys. They would not allow their women to work in the kolkhoz. Nor did they believe in slaving in the kolkhoz fields themselves. They tried whenever possible to find themselves jobs as drivers: looking after an engine was not degrading, their passion for rough riding found an outlet in the constant movement of a motor vehicle, and their passion for thieving in the opportunities drivers enjoy. This last passion, however, they also gratified directly. "We've been robbed," "We've been cleaned out," were concepts which they introduced to peaceful, honest, sleepy Kazakhstan. They were capable of rustling cattle, robbing a house, or sometimes simply taking what they wanted by force. As far as they were concerned, the local inhabitants, and those exiles who submitted so readily, belonged more or less to the same breed as the bosses. They respected only rebels.

And here is an extraordinary thing—everyone was afraid of them. No one could stop them from living as they did. The regime which had ruled the land for thirty years could not force them to respect its laws.

How did this come about? Here is an episode in which the explanation is perhaps epitomized. One of the pupils in the Kok-Terek school when I was teaching there was the young Chechen Abdul Khudayev. He inspired no warm feelings and did not try to do so; he seemed to be afraid of demeaning himself by making himself pleasant, he was always ostentatiously cold, he was very arrogant, and he could be cruel. But you could not help admiring his clear, precise mind. In mathematics and physics he never remained on the surface, with his schoolmates, but always went deeper, asked questions, tirelessly searched for the heart of the matter. Like all the children of settlers, he was inevitably drawn into the so-called "social activities" of the school—first the Young

Pioneers organization, then the Komsomol, the school committees, wall newspapers, character training courses, political discussion groups—the spiritual price for education which the Chechens paid so unwillingly.

Abdul lived with his old mother. None of their close relations had survived, except for Abdul's older brother, who had long ago taken to crime, had served more than one spell in the camps for theft and murder, but had always emerged before his time either under an amnesty or because he got remission for good conduct. One day he appeared in Kok-Terek, drank for two days without pausing for breath, quarreled with a local Chechen, seized a knife, and rushed at him. An old Chechen woman who had nothing to do with either of them barred his way, flinging her arms wide to stop him. If he had obeyed Chechen law he should have thrown down his knife and given up the chase. But he was by now a thief first and a Chechen second: he brought down his knife and fatally stabbed the innocent old woman. The thought of what awaited him according to the law of the Chechens now entered his drunken head. He rushed to the MVD to make a clean breast of the murder, and they gladly put him in jail.

He had found a hiding place, but that left his younger brother Abdul, his mother, and also an old Chechen of their clan, Abdul's uncle. News of the murder went around the Chechen community of Kok-Terek in a flash, and all three surviving members of the Khudayev clan gathered in their house, laid in stocks of food and water, blocked the window, nailed up the door, and lay low in this fortress. The Chechens of the murdered woman's clan now had to take vengeance on some member of the Khudayev clan. Until Khudayev blood was spilled in payment for their blood, they would be unworthy to be called human beings.

So the siege of the Khudayev house began. Abdul did not go to school—all Kok-Terek and the whole school knew why. A member of one of the top classes in our school, a Komsomol, an outstanding pupil, was threatened with murder by the knife at any moment—perhaps this very minute, as the bell rings and the others take their places at their desks, perhaps now while the literature teacher is talking about socialist humanism. Everybody knew; no one forgot it for a moment. Between classes they talked about nothing else—and could not bring themselves to look at each other. Neither the Party organization in the school, nor the Komsomol, nor the directors of studies, nor the headmaster, nor

the District Education Department—nobody went to try and save Khudayev, no one even approached his besieged home in Chechen territory, which was buzzing like a hornet's nest. And it wasn't only they: at the first breath of bloody vengeance, the District Party Committee, the Executive Committee of the District Soviet, the MVD post, and the militia behind their adobe walls, all of them so awesome to us until now, also froze in craven inactivity. A savage and ancient law had breathed on them—and all at once there was no Soviet power in Kok-Terek. Nor was its heavy hand quick to reach out from the provincial capital, Dzhambul, for three days went by and no plane flew in with troops, no firm instructions arrived, except an order to defend the jail with all forces to hand.

This helped the Chechens, and us, too, to see clearly the difference between real power on this earth and the mirage of power.

The Chechen elders were the only ones to show sense! They went first to the MVD and asked them to hand over the elder Khudayev for summary punishment. The MVD nervously refused. They came back to the MVD a second time, asking them to have Khudayev tried in public and to shoot him while they watched. If this was done, they promised that the vendetta against the Khudayevs would be at an end. No more reasonable compromise could have been devised. But think of the difficulties. A trial in open court! An execution promised in advance and carried out in public! Khudayev, after all, was not a political, he was a thief, a "class ally." The rights of 58's could be trampled underfoot, but not those of a multi-murderer. The MVD referred it to the oblast—and the request was turned down. "In that case," the old men informed them, "the younger Khudayev will be killed within the hour!" The bureaucrats of the MVD shrugged their shoulders: it was none of their business. They were not there to think about crimes as yet uncommitted.

But some faint awareness of the twentieth century touched . . . not the MVD—oh, no—but those hardened old Chechen hearts. In spite of everything, they forbade the avengers to exact vengeance! They sent a telegram to Alma-Ata. Some other old men, those most respected by the whole people, hurried down. They convened a council of elders, which anathematized the older Khudayev and sentenced him to death, where and whenever he came within reach of a Chechen knife. The other Khudayevs they summoned and told: "Go in peace. No one will touch you."

So Abdul took his books and went to school. There he was met with hypocritical smiles by the Party organizer and the Komsomol organizer. From the moment of his return he heard Communist social conscience extolled in lessons and political instruction periods, with never a mention of the vexatious incident. Not a muscle twitched in Abdul's somber face. He had learned all over again that the greatest force on earth is the law of vendetta.

We Europeans, at home and at school, read and pronounce only words of lofty disdain for this savage law, this cruel and senseless butchery. But the butchery is perhaps not so senseless after all. It does not sap the mountain peoples, but strengthens them. Not so very many fall victim to the law of vendetta—but what power the dread of it has over all around! With this law in mind, no highlander will casually insult another, as we insult each other in drink, from lack of self-control or just for the hell of it. Still less will any *non*-Chechen look for trouble with a Chechen, call him a thief or a ruffian, or accuse him of jumping the queue. For the answer may be given not in words, not in abuse, but with a knife in the ribs! And even if you grab a knife yourself (but you won't have one on you—you're civilized), you cannot give blow for blow, or your whole family will fall under the knife! The Chechens walk the Kazakh land with insolence in their eyes, shouldering people aside—and the "masters of the land" and non-masters alike respectfully make way for them. The law of vendetta creates a force field of fear—and so gives strength to its small mountain people.

"Strike your neighbors, that strangers may fear you!" The ancestors of the highlanders in remote antiquity could have found no stronger hoop to gird their people.

Has the socialist state offered them anything better?

Chapter 5

■

End of Sentence

In eight years of prison and prison camp I had never heard anyone who had experienced exile say a good word about it. But from his first days in jail under investigation and in transit, simply because the six flat stone surfaces of a cell press in on him too closely, the dream of exile burns like a secret light in the prisoner's mind, a flickering iridescent mirage, and the wasted breasts of prisoners on their dark bunks heave in sighs of longing: "If only they would sentence me to exile!"

I did not escape the common lot; far from it—the dream of exile had me more powerfully than most in its grip. At the Iyerusalim clay pit I listened to the cocks crowing in the village nearby, and dreamed of exile. From the roof of the checkpoint on the Kaluga road I looked at the unbroken mass of the alien capital and silently begged: Let me get as far from it as possible, to some out-of-the-way place of exile! I even sent a naïve appeal to the Supreme Soviet: for commutation of my eight years in the camps to exile for life, in however remote and wild a place. The elephant did not even sneeze in reply. (I had not yet realized that lifelong exile would always be waiting for me, but that it would come *after,* not *instead of,* the camp.)

In 1952 a dozen prisoners were "released" from the 3,000-strong "Russian" Camp Division at Ekibastuz. It looked very strange at the time: 58's, let out through the gates! Ekibastuz had been in existence for three years by then, and not a single man had been released, nor had anyone reached the end of his sentence. Evidently, for the few who had lived to see the day, the first wartime *tenners* had just ended.

We impatiently awaited letters from them. A few came, directly or indirectly. And we learned that nearly all of them had been taken from the camp to places of exile, although their sentences had not included exile. But this surprised no one. It was clear to our jailers and to us that justice, length of sentence, formal documentation, had nothing to do with it; the point was that once we had been declared enemies, the state would ever after assert the right of the stronger and trample us, crush us, squash us, until the day we died. And we were so used to it, it had become so much part of us, that no other state of affairs would have seemed normal either to the regime or to us.

In Stalin's last years it was not the fate of the exiles that caused alarm, but that of the nominally liberated, those who to all appearances were now safely beyond the gates, and unguarded, those from whom the tutelary gray wing of the MVD had apparently been withdrawn. Exile, which the powers that be obtusely regarded as an additional punishment, was a prolongation of the prisoner's irresponsible existence, the fatalistic routine in which he feels so secure. Exile relieved us of the need to choose a place of residence for ourselves, and so from troublesome uncertainties and errors. No place would have been right, except that to which they had sent us. This was the one and only place in the whole Soviet Union where no one could reproach us as intruders. Only there had we an assured and undeniable right to three square arshins of land.* And if, like me, you were alone in the world when you left the camp, with no one, anywhere, waiting for you, exile was perhaps the only place where you could hope to meet a kindred spirit.

Our masters are quick enough to arrest people, but less quick to release them. If some democratic Greek or socialist Turk had been kept in jail a single day longer than he should have been, the world press would have choked with indignation. I was happy enough to be held only a few days too long and then . . . released? No; after that I was in transit under guard. And they kept me on the road another month in what was now my *own* time.

Nonetheless, as we left the camp under guard we were still careful to respect the final prison superstitions: on no account must you look back at your last prison (or else you will return), and you must do the right thing with your spoon. (What was the right thing, though? Some said take it with you, or you would

return for it; others said fling it at the prison, or else the prison would pursue you. I had molded my spoon myself in the foundry, and I took it with me.)

The transit prisons flashed by again—Pavlodar, Omsk, Novosibirsk. Although our sentences had expired, they searched us, took prohibited articles from us; herded us into cramped, overcrowded cells, prison vans, Stolypin wagons; mixed us up with the criminals; the guard dogs growled at us as of old, the lads with the automatic rifles yelled "eyes front," all just as before.

Then at the Omsk Transit Prison a good-natured warder called out our names from our dossiers, and asked the five of us from Ekibastuz: "Which god have you got working for you?" "Why? Where are we going?" We were all ears: obviously it was somewhere nice. "Why, to the south," said the warder, marveling at it.

From Novosibirsk we were in fact diverted southward. We were going where it was warm! Where there was rice, where there were grapes and apples. What could it mean? Surely somewhere in the Soviet Union Comrade Beria could find us a worse place? Could exile really be like this? (I already had plans, which I kept to myself, to write a cycle of poems and call it "Lines on the Beauties of Exile.")

At Dzhambul station we were transferred from the Stolypin car with the usual harsh treatment, taken through a living corridor of escort troops to a lorry, and made to sit on the bare floor of the vehicle, as though now that we had served our time we might be tempted to run away. It was the dead of night, and only the waning moon dimly illuminated the dark avenue along which we were being carried, but there was light enough for us to see that it really was an avenue—of Lombardy poplars! So this was exile! We might almost be in the Crimea. It was the end of February, and on the Irtysh, where we had come from, it was cruelly cold, but here a spring breeze caressed us.

They took us to the jail—and the jail admitted us without the usual body search and bath. The accursed walls were losing some of their harshness! In the morning the block superintendent unlocked the door and said almost in a whisper, "Come out and bring all your belongings."

The devil was unclenching his claws. . . .

We stepped out into the arms of a red spring morning. The dawn light was warming the brick walls of the jail. A lorry was waiting for us in the middle of the yard, with two zeks who were

joining our party already sitting in the back. This was the time to breathe deeply, to look around, to steep ourselves in the uniqueness of that moment—but we simply could not waste the chance to strike up an acquaintance. One of our new companions, a skinny, gray-haired man with pale, watery eyes, was sitting on his crumpled belongings as upright, as majestic as a Tsar about to give audience to ambassadors. You might have thought that he was deaf or a foreigner, with no hope that we should find a common language. As soon as I was up on the lorry I decided to get into conversation with him—and he introduced himself in pure Russian, in a voice with no hint of a quaver in it: "I'm Vladimir Aleksandrovich Vasilyev."

And a spark of sympathy jumped between us. The heart senses who is a friend and who is no friend. This was a friend. In prison you must find out about people quickly—for all you know, you will be separated in a minute's time. No, of course we were no longer in prison, but still . . . Shouting above the noise of the engine, I interviewed him, and did not notice that the lorry had moved from the asphalted prison yard onto the cobbled street, forgot that I must not look back at my last jail (how many last jails would there yet be), did not even spare a glance for the bit of the outside world through which we were traveling—and soon we were back in the broad inner yard of a provincial MVD post, and once again we were forbidden to leave it for the town.

For the first minute you might have taken Vladimir Aleksandrovich for a man of ninety—his eyes that looked beyond time, his gaunt features, his lock of white hair, all told the same story. He was in fact seventy-three. He turned out to be one of the oldest surviving Russian engineers, one of our outstanding hydrotechnicians and hydrographers in the "Union of Russian Engineers." (What was that? I had never heard of it before. It was a high-powered public body created by the technical intelligentsia, one of those hundred-year leaps into the future, perhaps, of which Russia made several in the first two decades of the century, but all of which miscarried.) Vasilyev had been a prominent member, and he still recalled with solid satisfaction how "we refused to pretend that dates can be grown on dry sticks."

Which of course was why they were disbanded.

Half a century back, he had covered on foot or on horseback every inch of the Semirechye region, in which we had now arrived. Long ago, before the First World War, he had drawn up plans for

flooding the Chuisk Valley, for the Naryn cascade, and for boring a tunnel through the Chu-Ili mountains, and, still before the First World War, had begun carrying them out himself. He had sent abroad for six "electric excavators" and put them to work in this part of the world as early as 1912. (All six survived the Revolution and were passed off as a new Soviet invention at Chirchikstroi in the thirties.) After serving a sentence of fifteen years for "sabotage" (the last three in the Verkhne-Uralsk isolator), he had obtained a special act of indulgence: permission to spend his exile and die right there in Semirechye, where he had begun his career. (Even this favor would never have been granted if Beria had not remembered him from the twenties, when engineer Vasilyev had divided the waters of the Caucasus between its three republics.)

And that was why he was now sitting, sphinx-like, absorbed in his thoughts, on a sack in the back of a lorry. For him it was not just his first day of freedom, but his homecoming to the land of his youth, the land of his inspiration. No, human life is not so short as all that if you leave memorials along the way.

Not so long ago V.A.'s daughter had stopped at a newspaper window on the Arbat in Moscow to look at *Trud*. A devil-may-care correspondent was lavishing well-paid words on a rousing account of his journey through the Chuisk Valley, which had been irrigated and brought to life by creative Bolsheviks, with descriptions of the Naryn cascade, the ingenious hydrotechnical installations, the happy collective farmers. And suddenly—who can have whispered in his ear?—he ended with this: "But very few people know that all these transformations are the realization of the dream of the talented Russian engineer Vasilyev, who found no support in old bureaucratic Russia.[1] How sad that the young enthusiast did not live to see the triumph of his noble ideas!" The precious lines in the newspaper blurred, swam, Vasilyev's daughter tore the newspaper out of its case, pressed it to her breast, and carried it off, with a militiaman blowing his whistle after her.

While this was going on, the "young enthusiast" was sitting in a damp cell in the Verkhne-Uralsk isolator. Rheumatism, or some sort of bone disease, had bent the old man double, and he could no longer straighten his spine. Luckily, he was not alone in the cell, but shared it with some Swede or other who

1. At the end of 1917 Vasilyev was for all practical purposes the head of the Department of Land Improvement.

had cured his spinal trouble by massage.

Swedes are not very often found in Soviet jails. I remembered that I, too, had been in with one of them. His name was Erik . . .

"Erik Arvid Andersen?"* V.A. eagerly interrupted. (He was very quick in his speech and movements.)

Of course, it had to be! It was Arvid who had massaged him back to health! A reminder from the Archipelago, by way of farewell, that it's a small world after all. So that was where they had taken Arvid three years ago—to the Uralsk isolation prison. And somehow or other neither NATO nor his multimillionaire papa had made much of an effort to save the dear lad.[2]

Meanwhile, they had started calling us into the oblast command post, which was right there on the MVD yard, and consisted of a colonel, a major, and several lieutenants who were in charge of all exiles in Dzhambul oblast. We, however, had no access to the colonel, while the major only scanned our faces as though they were newspaper headlines, and it was the lieutenants who exercised their beautiful penmanship on the task of *processing* us.

My camp experience gave me a sharp nudge in the ribs. Look out! In these few short minutes your whole future is being decided! Don't waste any time! Demand, insist, protest! Rack your brains, turn yourself inside out, invent some reason, any reason, why you must at all costs remain in the oblast capital, or be sent to the nearest and most convenient district. (There was, in fact, a good reason, although I did not know it: secondary growths had been developing in me for two years

2. Pavel Veselov (Stockholm), who is now studying other cases of Swedish citizens seized by the Soviet authorities, puts forward the following hypothesis after analyzing E. A. Andersen's stories about himself: Both his appearance and the form of the name which he gave make it more probable that E. A. Andersen was a Norwegian, but for reasons of his own preferred to pass himself off as a Swede. It was much commoner for Norwegians to escape from their country after 1940 and serve in the British army, though a very few Swedes may have done so. E. A. might have been related to some Robertsons in Britain, but invented a relationship with General Robertson to make himself more valuable in the eyes of the MGB. It is not impossible that he had served in West Berlin after the war in Allied military intelligence, which was what made him interesting to the MGB. He had probably visited Moscow as a member of a British or Norwegian, not a Swedish, delegation (there was, I believe, no such Swedish visit at the time), but was probably a person of minor importance in it. Perhaps the MGB invited him to become a double agent, and perhaps it was for refusing this offer that he got his twenty years. Erik's father may have been a businessman, but not on such a large scale as he claimed. However, Erik often exaggerated —among other things his father's acquaintance with Gromyko (which was why the MGB showed him to Gromyko), to interest the MGB in the idea of demanding ransom, and so letting the West know of his plight.

now since my incomplete operation in the camp.)

No-o-o . . . I was not the man I had been. No longer the man I had been when I started serving my sentence. A sort of inspired immobility came over me, and I pleasurably abandoned myself to it. I enjoyed not making use of my importunate camp experience. I loathed the thought of improvising some wretched poverty-stricken excuse. No human being can know the future. The greatest of disasters may overtake a man in the best of places, and the greatest happiness may seek him out in the worst. Anyway, I had not even had time to ask questions and find out which were the good and which the bad districts in the oblast, because I had been preoccupied with the fate of the old engineer.

There was some sort of saving clause in his papers, because they allowed him to go into the town on his own two feet, walk to the oblast irrigation construction office and ask for work. For the rest of us there was only one destination: the Kok-Terek district. This is a patch of desert in the north of the oblast, the beginning of the lifeless Bet-Pak-Dala, which occupies the whole center of Kazakhstan. So much for the grapes we had dreamed of! . . .

A form printed on coarse brown paper was put before each of us for signature, after his name had been entered in a flowing hand and the date stamp applied.

Where had I met something similar? Of course—when they informed me of the Special Board's decision. Then, too, nothing had been asked of me but to take the pen and sign. Only then it was smooth Moscow paper. The pen and ink, though, were just as cheap and nasty.

Of what, then, had I been "this day informed"? That I, the person herein mentioned, was exiled *in perpetuity* to such and such a district, under the open surveillance (that old Tsarist terminology!) of the district MGB, and that in case of unauthorized departure beyond the borders of the district I should be charged under a Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet providing for a penalty of 20 (twenty) years of imprisonment with hard labor.

What was there to say? It was all perfectly legal. There were no surprises for us here. We signed with alacrity.[3]

3. Years later I would get hold of the Criminal Code of the R.S.F.S.R. and read with great satisfaction under Article 35 that sentence of exile was passed for terms from three to ten years, or by way of supplementary punishment after imprisonment for *up to five* years. This is a source of pride to Soviet jurists: that with the 1922 Criminal Code, loss

It also says in Article 35 that no one is exiled except by special order of the *court.* Or of a Special Board, at least? But it was not even a Special Board; it was merely the lieutenant on duty who prescribed perpetual exile for us.

An epigram gradually took shape in my mind—rather a lengthy one, I must admit:

Mere paper—with a hammer's speed
It shatters frail hopes of a kinder fate.
"Exiled eternally," I read,
"With the MGB to keep watch on the gate."
Yet I sign with a flourish, my heart is light.
Like the Alps, the basalts, or the firmament,
Like the stars (no, not those on your shoulders so bright!)—
Oh, enviable lot, I am permanent!
But can it, I wonder, be every word true?
Can the MGB really be permanent, too?

When Vladimir Aleksandrovich got back from town, I read him my epigram, and we laughed, laughed like children, like prisoners, like innocents. V.A. had a very happy laugh—like that of K.I. Strakhovich. There was, in fact, a profound similarity between them: they were people who had withdrawn so deeply into the life of the mind that no bodily suffering could upset their spiritual equilibrium.

Not that he had much to laugh about even now. They had made one of the mistakes expected of them, and exiled him, of course, to the wrong place. Only Frunze could assign him to the Chuisk Valley, to the sites of his earlier work. Here the Hydraulic Engineering Authority was concerned only with irrigation channels. Its head, a smug, semiliterate Kazakh, graciously permitted the creator of the Chuisk irrigation system to stand in the doorway of his office, telephoned regional Party headquarters, and consented to take V.A. on as a junior hydraulic engineer, as though he were a little girl fresh from technical school. But to Frunze he could not go: it was in a different republic.

Shall we sum up the whole history of Russia in a single phrase? It is the land of smothered opportunities.

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of civil rights, and all other penalties, for an indefinite term, ceased to exist in Soviet law—except for the most terrifying penalty of all—expulsion forever from the territory of the U.S.S.R. There is here "an important difference of principle between Soviet and bourgeois law" (see the collection of articles *From the Prisons* . . .). This is as may be, but to save the MVD labor, the simplest thing is to write out a *perpetual* sentence: there is then no need to watch out for sentences near expiry and worry your head looking for a way to renew them.

Still, the gray old man rubs his hands: his name is known to scientists; perhaps they will get him transferred. He, too, signs the document stating that he is exiled in perpetuity, and that if he absconds he will be sentenced to hard labor until he is ninety-three. I carry his things as far as the gate—the boundary line which I am forbidden to cross. Now he will look for someone kind enough to rent him one corner of a room, and he threatens to send for his old woman from Moscow. His children? . . . His children wouldn't come. They say that they cannot give up their Moscow apartments. Any other relatives? He has a brother. But his brother's lot has been a profoundly unhappy one: he is a historian who misunderstood the October Revolution, abandoned his homeland, and now, poor wretch, has the chair of Byzantine Studies at Columbia University. We laugh again, feel sorry for his brother, and embrace as we say goodbye. Yet another remarkable man has flashed by me and vanished forever.

The rest of us were for some reason kept for days in a tiny room, sleeping close-packed on a rough cracked floor, with scarcely room to stretch our legs out. It reminded me of the lockup in which I had begun my sentence eight years before. Discharged prisoners now, we were locked in for the night, and told to take the latrine pail inside if we wanted it. It differed from jail only in that for those few days we were no longer fed free of charge, but had to pay for food to be brought from the market.

On the third day a regular escort party with carbines arrived, made us sign for our travel money and rations, promptly took the travel money from us again (allegedly to buy tickets, but in reality they bullied the train conductors into letting us travel for nothing, and kept the money, considering that they had earned it), lined us up two by two with our belongings, and led us once more between the rows of poplars to the station. Birds were singing, the hum of spring was in the air—and it was only March 2! We felt hot in our padded clothes but we were glad to be in the south. Others may have different views, but for prisoners and exiles the greatest of hardships is severe cold.

For a whole day we were carried slowly back in the direction from which we had come, then, from the station at Chu, we were hurried along on foot for ten kilometers. Our sacks and cases made us sweat profusely, weighed us down, caused us to stumble, but still we dragged them along: our miserable carcasses might yet be grateful for every last rag carried out through the camp guard-

house. I was wearing two padded vests (one I had pinched during stocktaking), plus my long-suffering army greatcoat, worn threadbare by the earth of the trenches and that of the camp—how could I throw the faded, grimy old thing away now?

Day was ending, and we had not reached our destination. This meant spending yet another night in jail, at Novotroitsk. We had been free for such a long time—and still we went from jail to jail. The cell, the bare floor, the peephole, use the bucket, hands behind your backs, here's your hot water; the only thing they leave out is our rations, because we are *free men* now.

In the morning they sent up a lorry, and the same escort, after a night out of barracks, came to fetch us. Sixty kilometers farther into the steppe. We got stuck in muddy hollows, and jumped down from the lorry (something we could not have done as zeks) to heave and push it out of the mire, to get the eventful journey over and arrive in perpetual exile more quickly. The escort troops stood in a half-circle and kept guard over us.

The steppe sped by, kilometer after kilometer. To right and to left, as far as the eye could see, there was nothing but harsh gray inedible grass, and only very occasionally a wretched Kazakh village framed with trees. At length the tops of a few poplars (Kok-Terek means "green poplar") appeared ahead of us, over the curve of the steppe.

We had arrived! The lorry sped between Chechen and Kazakh adobe huts, raising a cloud of dust and drawing a pack of indignant dogs in pursuit. Amiable donkeys with little carts made way for us, and from one yard a camel turned slowly and contemptuously to look at us. There were people, too, but we had eyes only for the women—those unfamiliar, forgotten creatures: look at that pretty dark girl in the doorway, shading her eyes with her hand to watch our lorry pass; look at those three walking together in flowery red dresses. Not one of them Russian. "This is all right —we shall find wives for ourselves yet!" This cheerful shout in my ear came from V. I. Vasilenko, a forty-year-old sea captain who had lived an untroubled life in Ekibastuz in charge of the laundry, and was now on his way to freedom, to spread his cramped wings and look for a ship.

Past the district stores, the tearoom, the clinic, the soviet offices, the district Party headquarters with its slated roof, the House of Culture under its reed thatch. Our lorry stopped near the MVD-MGB building. Covered with dust, we jumped down, went into

its front yard, and, unembarrassed by passers-by in the main street, washed ourselves down to the waist.

Directly across the street from the MGB stood an amazing building, one story, yet quite high; four Doric columns solemnly upheld a false portico, at the foot of the columns were two steps faced with smooth stone, and over all this—there was a blackened straw roof. My heart could not help beating faster. It was a school! A ten-year school. Stop pounding, be quiet, you nuisance. That building is nothing to you.

Crossing the main street to the magic gate goes a girl with waved hair, neatly dressed in a little wasp-waisted jacket. Surely she is walking on air? She is a *teacher!* She is too young to have graduated from an institute; she must have attended a seven-year school and then a teachers' training college. How I envy her! What a gulf there is between her and a common laborer like me. We belong to different estates, and I would never dare to walk arm in arm with her.

Meanwhile, someone was yanking the new arrivals into his quiet office one by one and busying himself with them. Who, would you think? Why, godfather, of course, the secret police officer. You find him in the land of exile, too. There, too, he plays the leading role!

The first encounter is very important: we shall be playing cat and mouse with him not just for a month but *in perpetuity.* Now I shall cross his threshold and we will discreetly look each other over. He is a very young Kazakh; he wears the mask of polite reserve, and I wear that of artlessness. We both know that our insignificant phrases, such as "Have a sheet of paper" and "Is there a pen I can use?" are the beginning of a duel. But it is important for me to pretend that I haven't the slightest idea of this. It must be self-evident that I am always the same, unbuttoned and guileless. "Come on, you brown devil, get it firmly into your head: this one needs no special surveillance, he's come here for a quiet life; imprisonment has taught him something."

What's this I must fill in? A questionnaire, of course. And a curriculum vitae. This will open the new file, lying ready on the table. Afterward all tales told against me, all character reports from official persons, will be filed there. And as soon as the outlines of a new *case* can be roughed out, and the mainland gives the signal to put a few more inside—inside they will put me (there's an adobe jailhouse right here, in the backyard),

and slap another *tenner* on me.

I hand over the initial documents; the secret police officer peruses them and files them in his loose-leaf folder.

"Could you please tell me where the District Education Department is?" I suddenly ask him, politely and casually.

And he politely tells me. His eyebrows do not shoot up in surprise. From this I deduce that I can go and ask for work, with no objection from the MGB. (As an old prisoner, of course, I did not cheapen myself by asking him outright whether *I was allowed* to work in the school network.)

"Can you tell me when I shall be allowed to go there without escort?"

He shrugs his shoulders.

"Just for today, while you're being . . . it would be as well if you didn't go much beyond the gates. But you can pop out on business."

And off I *walk!* I wonder whether everybody knows the meaning of this great free word. I am walking along *by myself!* With no automatic rifles threatening me, from either flank or from the rear. I look behind me: no one there! If I like, I can take the right-hand side, past the school fence, where a big pig is rooting in a puddle. And if I like, I can walk on the left, where hens are strutting and scratching immediately in front of the District Education Department.

I walk the two hundred meters to the Department, and my spine, which seemed bent for eternity, is already just a little straighter, my manner already a little more relaxed. In the course of those two hundred meters I have graduated to the next higher civil estate.

I go in, wearing an old woolen tunic from my days at the front, and my old, my terribly old twill trousers. My shoes are camp issue, pigskin, and the obtrusive ends of my underpants are not entirely hidden in them.

Two fat Kazakhs sit there—inspectors of the District Education Department, according to their nameplates.

"I should like a job in a school," I say, with growing confidence and even a sort of offhandedness, as though I were asking where the water jug was.

They prick up their ears. After all, in a Kazakh village out in the desert, new teachers looking for jobs do not arrive every half hour. And although the Kok-Terek district covers a bigger area

than Belgium, they know by sight everyone in it with seven years of schooling.

"What did you study?" they ask in fairly good Russian.

"Physics and mathematics, at the university."

They are quite startled. They exchange glances. They start gabbling in rapid Kazakh.

"And . . . where have you come from?"

As though there could be any mystery about it, I have to spell it out for them. What sort of idiot would come to this place looking for a job, and in March at that?

"I got here an hour ago; I'm an exile."

They assumed a knowing look and vanished one after the other into the director's office. When they had left I noticed that the typist, a Russian woman of fifty or so, was looking at me. An instantaneous spark of sympathy—we were compatriots. She, too, was from the Archipelago! Where was her home, why had she been put away, in which year? Nadezhda Nikolayevna Grekova, daughter of a Cossack family in Novocherkassk, arrested in '37, was a simple typist, but the Organs had used their whole arsenal to persuade her that she was a member of some fantastic terrorist organization. She had done ten years, and now she was a *repeater,* exiled in perpetuity.

Lowering her voice, and keeping one eye on the director's door, which was ajar, she briefed me succinctly: two ten-year schools, several seven-year schools, the district was gasping for math teachers, had not a single one with higher education, had never seen a physicist close enough to know what sort of animal he was. A ring from the inner office. In spite of her plumpness, the typist sprang up and hurried in, all eagerness to serve, and on her return summoned me in a loud official voice.

There was a red cloth on the table. Both inspectors were sitting very comfortably on a sofa. On a big armchair under a portrait of Stalin sat the director: a Kazakh woman, small, lithe, attractive, with something feline and something serpentine in her manner. Stalin grinned at me malevolently from his frame.

They made me sit over by the door, keeping me at a distance as though they were interrogating a prisoner, and began an excruciatingly pointless conversation, which might have been much shorter had they not followed every few sentences to me with a ten-minute conference in Kazakh, while I sat by like a halfwit. They questioned me in detail about where I had taught and when,

and expressed their misgivings that I might have forgotten my subject or my teaching technique. Then, after endlessly stalling, endlessly sighing that there were no vacancies, that the schools in the district were chock-full of mathematicians and physicists, that it was difficult to squeeze out even half an extra stipend, that rearing the young in our epoch was a responsible task, they got around to the really important point. *What had I done* to land in jail? What crime, exactly, had I committed? The cat-snake screwed up her sly eyes in anticipation, as though the blood-red glare of my crime was already painfully beating on her Bolshevik face. I looked over her head at the sinister features of the Satan who had wrecked my whole life. With his portrait watching me, what could I tell them about our relationship?

I used a prison trick to frighten these educators off: what they wanted me to tell them was a state secret, and I had no right to do so. What I wanted to know, without further waste of time, was whether they would take me on.

The discussions in Kazakh went on and on. Who would be so bold as to employ a state criminal at his own risk? But they found a way out: making me write a curriculum vitae and complete a questionnaire in two copies. Here we go again! Paper can take anything. Surely it was no more than an hour ago that I had filled in these forms. I filled them in yet again and returned to the MGB.

I inspected their yard, and the homemade prison inside, with interest, saw how even they had imitated the grownups by quite unnecessarily knocking a little window for parcels in the adobe wall, although it was so low that baskets could be passed over it. Ah, but how can you have an MGB post without a parcels window? I wandered around their yard and found myself breathing much more freely than in the musty District Education Department. From there, the MGB was an enigma, and the inspectors' blood ran cold at the thought of it. But over here, I was at home, with *my own ministry.* The three dolts of commandants (two of them officers) were quite frankly there to keep watch on us—we were their bread and butter. There was no mystery about it.

They were easygoing and allowed us to spend the night not in a locked room but out in the yard, on hay.

A night under the open sky! We had forgotten what it was like. . . . There had always been locks, and bars, always walls and ceilings. I had no thought of sleep. I walked and walked and walked about the prison service yard, which was bathed in soft,

warm light. A cart left where it had been unhitched, a well, a drinking trough, a small hayrick, the black shadows of horses under an open-sided shed—it was all so peaceful, so ancient, so free from the cruel imprint of the MVD. It was only the third of March, but there was not the slightest chill in the night air; it was still almost summery, as it had been in the daytime. Again and again the braying of donkeys rose over the sprawling town of Kok-Terek, long-drawn-out and passionate, telling the she-asses of their love, of the ungovernable strength flooding their bodies. Some of the braying was probably the she-asses answering. I found it difficult to distinguish one voice from another, but that powerful bass bellowing was perhaps the noise of camels. I felt that if I only had a voice I, too, would start baying at the moon: I shall be able to breathe here! I shall be able to move around!

Surely I should break through that paper curtain of forms! With that trumpeting night around me, I felt superior to all those timorous bureaucrats. To teach! To feel myself a man again! To sweep into the classroom, and run my burning eyes over childish faces! My finger points to a drawing—they all hold their breath! Given, to prove, construction, proof—they all breathe freely again.

I cannot sleep! I walk and walk and walk in the moonlight. The donkeys sing their song. The camels sing. Every fiber in me sings: I am free! I am free!

In the end I lie down beside my comrades, on some hay under the open-sided shelter. Two steps away from us, horses stand at their mangers peacefully champing hay all night long. Surely there could be no sweeter, no more friendly sound on this our first night of freedom.

Champ away, you mild, inoffensive creatures!

Next day we were allowed to move into private lodgings. I found myself a henhouse to suit my pocket, with a single bleary window and such a low roof that even where it was highest, in the middle, I could not stand upright. "Give me a low-roofed cottage," I once wrote in prison, dreaming of exile. It was not very pleasant, all the same, not being able to raise my head. Still, it was a little house of my own! The floor was earthen. I put my padded camp vest on it, and there was my bed! But Aleksandr Klimentiyevich Zdanyukevich, an exiled engineer, who had formerly taught at the Bauman Institute, quickly lent me a couple of

wooden boxes, on which I managed to make myself comfortable. I had no oil lamp as yet—I had nothing!! an exile must select and buy every single thing he needs, as though he has just landed on this earth—but I did not feel the want of it. All those years, in our cells and our huts, the state's electricity had seared our souls, and now darkness was bliss. Even darkness can be an element of freedom! In the darkness and the silence (the noise of the loudspeaker on the town square might have reached me, but this was Kok-Terek, and it had been out of action for three days), I simply lay on my boxes and enjoyed it!

What more could I desire? . . .

But the morning of March 6 surpassed anything that I could have wished for! Chadova, my elderly landlady, an exile from Novgorod, whispered, because she dared not say it out loud: "Go and listen to the radio. I'm afraid to repeat what I've just heard."

Something told me to do as she said: I went over to the central square. A crowd of perhaps two hundred people—a lot for Kok-Terek—huddled around the post under the loudspeaker and the sullen sky. There were many Kazakhs, most of them old men, among the crowd. Their bald heads were bare, and they held their red-brown muskrat-fur hats in their hands. They were grief-stricken. The younger people seemed less concerned. Two or three tractor drivers had not removed their caps. Nor, of course, would I. Before I could make out what the announcer was saying (he spoke with a histrionic catch in his voice), understanding dawned on me.

This was the moment my friends and I had looked forward to even in our student days. The moment for which every zek in Gulag (except the orthodox Communists) had prayed! He's dead, the Asiatic dictator is dead! The villain has curled up and died! What unconcealed rejoicing there would be back home in the Special Camp! But where I was, Russian girls, schoolteachers, stood sobbing their hearts out. "What is to become of us now?" They had lost a beloved parent. . . . I wanted to yell at them across the square: "Nothing will become of you now! Your fathers will not be shot! Your husbands-to-be will not be jailed! And you will never be stigmatized as relatives of prisoners!"

I could have howled with joy there by the loudspeaker; I could even have danced a wild jig! But alas, the rivers of history flow slowly. My face, trained to meet all occasions, assumed a frown of mournful attention. For the present I must

pretend, go on pretending as before.

All the same, my exile had begun with magnificent auguries!

Once again, a whole day was devoted to writing a poem: "The Fifth of March."

Ten days passed—and the rival barons, wrangling over portfolios and eyeing each other nervously, abolished the MGB altogether! So that I had been right to doubt whether the MGB was there *forever.*[4]

Injustice, inequality, and slavery apart—is anything "forever" in this world of ours?

4. Six months later, of course, it was back in the form of the KGB, staffed as before.

Chapter 6

■

The Good Life in Exile

1. Bicycle nails ..... ½ kilo
2. Shoo 5
3. Ash-pan 2
4. Glashes 10
5. Fencil case, child's 1
6. Glope 1
7. Match ..... 50 boxes
8. "Bat" lamp 2
9. Tooth past 8
10. Gingerbread ..... 34 kilos
11. Vodka ..... 156 half-liters

This was the list of all goods in stock and due for repricing in the general store at the village of Aidarly. Inspectors and stocktakers of the Kok-Terek District Consumer Cooperative (RaiPO) had drawn up the list, and I was now turning the handle of a calculating machine and reducing the prices of some items by 7.5 and of others by 1.5 percent. Prices were plunging alarmingly and it was to be expected that both "fencil case" and "glope" would be sold before the new school year began, that the nails would find a home in bicycles, and that only the great gingerbread pile, probably prewar, was on its way down into the category of unsalable stocks. As for the vodka, even if the price went up it wouldn't outlast May Day.

The price reductions, which according to Stalinist custom took place in time for April 1, and by which the toilers gained so many million rubles (the full benefit was calculated and

published in advance), hit me hard.

By then I had spent a whole month in exile, going through all I had earned in the "self-financing" foundry at Dzhezkazgan—a free man, supporting myself on Gulag money—and calling regularly at the District Education Department to try and find out whether they would take me on. But the snakelike director had stopped receiving me, the two fat inspectors could scarcely find time to growl at me, and toward the end of the month I was shown a ruling from the Oblast Education Department that all schools in Kok-Terek district were fully staffed with math teachers and that there was no possibility of finding me work.

Meanwhile I had been writing a play *(Decembrists Without December),* without having to go through the morning and evening body searches, and with no need to destroy what I had written at short intervals, as I used to. I had no other occupation, and after the camp I liked it that way. Once a day I went to the "tearoom" and ate some hot broth for two rubles—the same thin soup they sent out in a bucket for the prisoners in the local jail. Coarse black bread was sold freely in the local shop. I had bought potatoes, and even a lump of pork fat. I myself had brought a donkeyload of underbrush from the thickets, so that I could light my cooking stove if I liked. My happiness was not far from complete, and I thought to myself: If they won't give me a job, they needn't; while my money lasts I'll go on writing my play. I may never have so much freedom again!

When I was least expecting it, one of the three commandants crooked a finger at me in the street. He took me to the RaiPO, into the office of the director, a Kazakh as round as a cannonball, and said with solemn emphasis: "The mathematician."

What miracle was this? No one asked me why I had been inside, or gave me forms and curricula vitae to fill in! There and then, his secretary, an exiled Greek girl of cinematic beauty, tapped out with one finger an order appointing me a Planning Officer with a salary of 450 rubles a month. That same day two other unplaced exiles were assigned to the RaiPO with just as little formality, with no forms to fill in for leisurely study: Vasilenko, the oceangoing ship's captain, and someone I did not yet know, the very reserved Grigory Samoilovich M——z. Vasilenko was already nursing a plan to deepen the river Chu (cows could ford it in the summer months) and introduce a motorboat service: he had asked the command post to let him go and survey the channel. Captain

Mann, his classmate at navigation school and on the training brig *Tovarishch,* was just at that time fitting out the *Ob* for a voyage to the Antarctic—but Vasilenko was packed off to the RaiPO as a storeman.

But we were not wanted as planners, or storemen, or ledger clerks—all three of us were thrown in to deal with an emergency: the repricing of goods. On the night of March 31–April 1, year in and year out, the RaiPO was in the throes of despair, and there never were and never could be enough people. They had to make an inventory of all the goods (and expose all the thieving salespeople, though not with a view to prosecution), reprice them—and begin trading the very next day at the new prices, which were so very advantageous to the toilers. But the total length of all railways and highroads in our desert district was . . . zero kilometers, and shops out in the wilds just never could bring these new prices, so advantageous to the toiler, into operation before May 1: for a solid month all shops stopped trading altogether, while the lists were being reckoned up and confirmed by the RaiPO, and delivered by camel. But in the district center itself, trade could simply not be disrupted just before May Day!

By the time we arrived in the RaiPO, fifteen people—permanent staff and temporaries—were already working on it. Every desk was sheeted with inventories on rough paper, and nothing could be heard but the clicking of abacuses—on which the expert bookkeepers were both multiplying and dividing—and businesslike exchanges of abuse. They sat us down to work at once. I was soon fed up with multiplying and dividing on paper, and I asked for a calculating machine. There wasn't a single one in the RaiPO, and anyway none of them knew how to use such a thing, but someone remembered seeing some sort of gadget with figures in a cupboard at the District Statistics Administration, only nobody there used it either. They telephoned, went over, and came back with it. I started whirring, and quickly jotting down rows of figures, while the senior bookkeepers glowered at me, wondering whether I was a rival.

I just turned my handle and thought to myself: How quickly a zek gets cheeky—or, putting it in literary language, how quickly a man's requirements grow! I was dissatisfied because they had torn me away from the play I was writing in my dark hovel; dissatisfied because they had not given me a job in a school; dissatisfied because they had *forced* me—to what? to dig in frozen

soil? to mix mud for bricks with my bare feet in icy water? No, they had forcibly put me at a clean desk to turn the handle of a calculating machine and enter figures in columns. At the beginning of my time in the camps, if they had ordered me to do this blissful work twelve hours a day, without pay, for as long as I was inside, I should have been beside myself with joy! As it was, they were paying me 450 rubles for it, I should be able to drink a liter of milk every day, and I was turning my nose up and wanting more.

The RaiPO had been bogged down in the repricing exercise for a week (each item had to be put in the right category for the overall price reduction, then reclassified for the rural price differential) and still not a single shop could begin trading. Then the obese chairman, who beat all the rest for idleness, assembled us all in his purely ceremonial office, and said:

"Right, listen. According to the latest findings of medical science, nobody needs eight hours' sleep. Four hours are absolutely adequate! So these are my orders: you'll start work at seven A.M., finish at two A.M.; one hour's break for dinner and one for supper."

As far as I could tell, not one of us was amused rather than awed by this stupefying outburst. We all shrank into ourselves, said nothing, plucked up our courage only to discuss the best time for the supper break.

This was it—the exile's lot, of which I had been warned. It was made up of orders like this. All those sitting there were exiles, trembling for their jobs: if they were dismissed, it would be a long time before they found anything else in Kok-Terek. And anyway, it was not for the director personally, it was for the country, *it had to be done.* They even thought the latest findings of medical science quite reasonable. Oh, how I longed to get up and jeer at that self-satisfied hog! To relieve my feelings just for once! But that would have been "Anti-Soviet Agitation," pure and simple—inciting people to sabotage an operation of major importance. You go through life from stage to stage—schoolboy, student, citizen, soldier, prisoner, exile—and it is always the same: the bosses are always too heavy, too strong for you, and you must bow down and keep silent.

If he had said until ten in the evening I would have stayed. But he was ordering us to face bloodless execution; ordering me, in this place, where I was free, to stop writing! Oh, no! To hell with you

and with the price reductions. My camp experience suggested a way out: not to answer back, but quietly to do the opposite. I tamely listened to the order with the rest of them, but at five o'clock I rose from my desk and left. And I did not return until nine in the morning. All my colleagues were already sitting there, counting, or pretending to count. They looked at me as though I were crazy. M——z, who secretly approved of my behavior but dared not imitate me, informed me privately that the boss had stood over my empty desk screaming that he would drive me a hundred kilometers into the desert.

I admit that my heart was in my boots. The MVD could of course do anything. They could easily chase me out there. A hundred kilometers—why not?—and I would have seen the last of the district center. But I was born lucky: I had landed on the Archipelago after the war, missing the most lethal period; and now I had arrived in exile after Stalin's death. In the past month something new had crept through even to our local MVD command.

Almost imperceptibly, a new time was beginning—the mildest three years in the history of the Archipelago.

The chairman did not summon me, or come to see me. I finished the day's work still fresh, with dozing and delirious people all around me, and decided to leave at five in the evening again. I didn't care how it ended, as long as it was quick.

How often in my life have I observed that a man can safely sacrifice a great deal as long as he clings to the essential. The play which I had been carrying within me even in the Special Camp, at hard labor, I refused to sacrifice—and I triumphed. For a whole week they all worked nights—and they got used to my empty desk. Even the chairman just looked the other way when he passed me in the corridor.

But it was not my destiny to bring order into the rural cooperatives of Ka-zek-stan. A young Kazakh, head of a teaching department, suddenly appeared in the RaiPO. Until I appeared he had been the only university graduate in Kok-Terek, and very proud of it. My arrival, however, did not arouse his envy. Whether he wanted to reinforce his school before the first batch of pupils took their final exam, or to vex the snakelike director of the Education Department, I don't know, but he ordered me to "bring your diploma along quickly." I ran home like a schoolboy to fetch it. He put it in his pocket and went off to a trade union conference

in Dzhambul. Three days later he looked in again and laid before me an extract from an order made by the Oblast Education Department. Over the same shameless signature which had certified in March that the schools in the district were fully staffed, I was now, in April, appointed to teach both math and physics, to both graduating classes, and just three weeks before their final examination! He was taking a chance, this director of studies. Not so much politically; what he had to fear was that I might have forgotten all my mathematics during my years in the camps. When the day of the written examination in geometry and trigonometry arrived, he did not allow me to open the envelope in the presence of my pupils, but took all the teachers into the headmaster's office and stood over me while I solved the problems. The fact that my answers coincided with those in the envelope put him, and the other math teachers, in a festive mood. It was easy enough to pass for a second Descartes in that place! I had still to learn that every year, during the final examinations, there were periodic calls from the villages to the district center: We can't work it out! It wasn't formulated properly! The teachers themselves had only seven years of schooling behind them. . . .

Shall I describe the happiness it gave me to go into the classroom and pick up the chalk? This was really the day of my release, the restoration of my citizenship: I stopped noticing all the other things which made up the life of an exile.

When I was in Ekibastuz our column was often marched past the local school. I would look upon it as at some inaccessible paradise, at the children running about the yard, at the teachers in bright dresses, and the tinkle of the bell from the front steps cut me to the heart. I had been reduced to such desperate longing by my hopeless prison years, my years of general labor in the camps. It seemed to me the supreme, heartbreaking happiness to enter a classroom carrying a register as that bell rang, and start a lesson with the mysterious air of one about to unfold wonders. (This was, of course, my teacher's gift craving satisfaction, but partly perhaps my hunger for self-esteem. I needed the contrast after years of humiliation, years of knowing that my talents were unwanted.)

But while my gaze was fixed on the life of the Archipelago and the state at large, I had lost sight of something very elementary: that sometime during or since the war the Soviet school had died; it no longer existed; there remained only a bloated corpse, a bag of wind. In the capital and in the hamlet the schools were dead.

When spiritual death creeps through the land like poison gas, the school and its pupils are of course among the first to suffocate.

Yet I only discovered this some years later, when I returned from the land of exile to metropolitan Russia. In Kok-Terek I had no inkling of it: in the deadly fog of obscuration all around us, the exile children had not yet choked, they still lived.

Those were very special children. They were growing up in the consciousness of their depressed status. In school council meetings and other waffling sessions, they were described and sometimes heard themselves described as Soviet children, growing up to live under Communism, whose freedom of movement was only temporarily restricted—no more than that. But they felt, every one of them felt the collar around his neck, had felt it from early childhood, as long as he could remember. The whole world which they knew from magazines and films—so varied, so rich, bubbling with life—was inaccessible to them, and there was no hope of entering it even for the boys, through the army. There was a very faint chance that a very few would obtain permission from the MVD post to go to a city, to be allowed when they got there to take an entrance examination, to be admitted to an institute, if they passed, and once in, to complete their studies successfully. So that all the discoveries they would ever make about the vast, inexhaustible world must be made there, in the school, which, for many years, was the beginning and end of their education. Moreover, life in the wilderness was so starkly simple that they were free from the distractions and dissipations which spoil twentieth-century urban youth from London to Alma-Ata. In the urban centers, children had lost the habit and the taste for study, studied as though discharging an irksome obligation, just to stay on the books till they were old enough to leave. But for the children in our exile colonies, if they were well taught, there was nothing more important in life, nothing else mattered. Studying avidly, they felt that they were rising above their second-class status, competing on equal terms with first-class children. Only in earnest study could they slake their ambitions.

(No, there were other ways: by holding elective office in school; in the Komsomol; and, from the age of sixteen, at the polls, in general *elections*. How they longed, poor things, for the illusion of equal rights, if nothing more. Many proudly joined the Komsomol and made sincere political declarations in their five-minute speeches. I tried to instill into one German girl, Victoria Nuss,

who had won a place in a two-year teachers' training college, the idea that an exile should be proud of his position, not distressed by it. It was hopeless. She looked at me as though I had gone mad. Of course, there were others who did not hurry into the Komsomol. They were hauled in forcibly. You still haven't joined, although you're allowed to—now why is that? In Kok-Terek some young girls, Germans, members of a clandestine religious sect, were compelled to join to save their parents from being driven farther out into the desert. Whoso shall offend one of these little ones . . . it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck.)

I have been speaking all this time about the "Russian" classes in the Kok-Terek school (there were scarcely any Russians proper among them—they were Germans, Greeks, Koreans, a few Kurds and Chechens, some Ukrainians from families which had settled in the region at the beginning of the century, and Kazakhs whose parents had "responsible posts" and wanted their children educated in Russian). But most of the Kazakh children were in "Kazakh classes." They were in very truth still savages, and most of them (those who were not corrupted by the high standing of their families) were very straightforward, sincere, with a sound sense of good and evil until false or conceited teachers perverted it. In fact, nearly all teaching in Kazakh was merely the propagation of ignorance: the first generation, dragged with difficulty through their diploma course, half-educated and hugely self-important, dispersed to instruct the rising generation, while Kazakh girls left schools and teachers' training colleges with "satisfactory" marks in spite of their utter and impenetrable ignorance. So that when these barely civilized children caught a glimpse of real teaching, they drank it in not just with their eyes and ears but with open mouths.

With such receptive children, I reveled in my teaching duties at Kok-Terek, and for three years this sufficed to keep me happy (and perhaps it would have done so for many years longer). There were not hours enough in the timetable for me to correct or make up for the mistakes and omissions of the past, so I prescribed additional evening classes, group discussions, field work, astronomical observations, and they turned up in greater numbers and higher spirits than if they had been going to the cinema. I was also put in charge of a class—a purely Kazakh class at that—but even this was almost enjoyable.

However, the bright side was bounded by the classroom door and the lesson bell. In the staff common room, the director's office, and the District Education Department, the atmosphere was smirched not just with the petty tyranny universal in our state, but with a more pernicious variety peculiar to the land of exile. When I arrived there were already some Germans, and some administrative exiles, among the teachers. We were all in the same oppressed situation: every opportunity was taken to remind us that we were allowed to teach on sufferance, and that this favor could always be withdrawn. The exiles on the staff, even more than other teachers (though they, too, were just as dependent), dreaded angering high officials in the district by failing to give their children good marks. They dreaded, too, angering the authorities with poor examination results—and deliberately marked too high, making their own contribution to the propagation of ignorance in Kazakhstan at large. Apart from this, special dues and duties fell upon exile teachers (and also their young Kazakh colleagues): 25 rubles were deducted every payday, for whose benefit nobody knew. The headmaster, Berdenov, might suddenly announce that it was his little daughter's birthday, and the teachers would have to contribute 50 rubles each for a present. Apart from this, one or another of the teachers would be called to the headmaster's office or the Education Department and asked for a "loan" of 300 to 500 rubles. (These things, however, were typical of the local style or system. Kazakh pupils were forced to give a sheep or half a sheep each for the graduation ceremony; those who did were assured of their certificates even if they were completely ignorant. The graduation party would turn into a great booze-up for the district Party activists.) In addition, all the district bosses were taking correspondence courses, and teachers in our school were forced to complete all their written tests for them (the orders were transmitted as though from feudal lords, through the directors of studies, and the teacher serfs were not even vouchsafed a look at *their* external students).

I don't know whether it was firmness on my part, made possible by my "irreplaceability," which became immediately obvious, or whether it was the milder climate of the times, or perhaps both, that helped me to keep my neck out of this harness. My pupils would be eager to learn only as long as I marked honestly, and I did so, with no thought for district secretaries. Nor did I pay any levies, or make "loans" to the bosses (the snaky head of the

Education Department had the impudence to ask!). I thought it quite enough that the needy state fleeced us of a month's salary every May (exile had restored to us the free man's privilege, denied us in the camps, of *subscribing to the state loan*). But my concern for principle stopped there.

I worked side by side with the biology and chemistry teacher Georgi Stepanovich Mitrovich, a Serb who had done a *tenner* on the Kolyma for "counter-revolutionary Trotskyite activity," and who, though now old and sick, fought doggedly for justice in the local affairs of Kok-Terek. Dismissed from the District Health Department, he had nonetheless been taken on by the school, and had transferred his efforts there. Indeed, wherever you looked in Kok-Terek there was lawlessness aggravated by ignorance, barbaric conceit, and smug clannishness. This lawlessness was a dark and tangled thicket, but Mitrovich fought selflessly and disinterestedly against it (with Lenin's name on his lips, it is true), exposed the corrupt at teachers' meetings and district teachers' conferences, failed ignorant high-ranking external students and "one-sheep" graduating students, wrote complaints to the oblast center, to Alma-Ata, sent telegrams to Khrushchev in person (seventy parents' signatures were collected for appeals on his behalf, and such telegrams were dispatched in another district, because they would not have got through from ours). He demanded checkups, inspections, then, when inspectors arrived and turned against him, he would start writing again; he was analyzed at special teachers' meetings, accused of filling children with anti-Soviet propaganda (and came within a hairbreadth of arrest!), accused no less seriously of ill-treating the goats that browsed on the Young Pioneers' garden plots; he was dismissed and reinstated, he tried to get compensation for enforced absence from work, he was transferred to another school, refused to go, was dismissed again—he put up a splendid fight! If only I had joined him, what a drubbing we would have given them!

Yet I gave him no help at all. I held my peace. I always avoided taking part in the final vote (so as not to be against him) by slipping away to a club meeting or a tutorial. In this way I did nothing to prevent the external students with Party cards from obtaining pass marks: they *were* the regime—let them cheat the regime of which they were part. I had my own concerns to keep secret: I was writing and writing. I was saving myself for a different struggle later on. But there is a larger question to be answered:

was Mitrovich's struggle right? Was it necessary?

His battle was utterly hopeless, and he knew it: no one could unravel that tangled skein. And if he had won hands down, it would have done nothing to improve the *social order,* the system. It would have been no more than a brief, vague gleam of hope in one narrow little spot, quickly swallowed by the clouds. Nothing that victory might bring could balance the risk of rearrest—which was the price he might pay (only the Khrushchev era saved Mitrovich). Yes, his battle was hopeless, but it is human to be outraged by injustice, even to the point of courting destruction! His struggle could end only in defeat—but no one could possibly call it useless. If we had not all been so sensible, not all been forever whining to each other: "It won't help! It can't do any good!" our land would have been quite different! Mitrovich was not even a citizen—he was only an exile—but the district authorities feared the flash of his spectacles.

They feared him, yes, but when election time came around—the bright day on which we *elected* our beloved democratic rulers—the difference disappeared between the intrepid warrior Mitrovich (where was his fighting spirit now?), my noncommittal self, and M——z, who was even more reserved, and on the face of it the most pliant of the three; we all alike concealed our suffering and our disgust and took part in that festival of fools. Nearly all exiles had *permission* to take part in elections, they cost so little, and even those *deprived of rights* suddenly discovered themselves on the list and were hurried off to vote at the double. We did not even have voting booths in Kok-Terek. There was one box, with undrawn curtains, somewhere up a corner, so out of the way that it would have been embarrassing to make for it. Voting consisted in carrying the ballot forms to an urn as quickly as you could and tossing them in. Even stopping to scrutinize the candidates' names was enough to rouse suspicion: why read them—maybe you think the Party organs don't know whom to nominate? When he had cast his vote, everyone was entitled to go boozing (drink his wages, or an advance which would always be given at election time). Dressed in their best suits, they all (exiles included) exchanged solemn greetings, wishing each other a *happy holiday.* . . .

That's one good thing you can say for the camps—there were none of these elections!

Once, Kok-Terek elected a people's judge, a Kazakh—unani-

mously, of course. As usual, they congratulated each other on the great day. But a few months later this judge was accused of a criminal offense, by the district in which he had previously dealt justice (unanimously elected there, too). It turned out that in Kok-Terek, also, he had already had time to line his pockets comfortably with bribes from private persons. Alas, they had to remove him and hold a by-election. Once more the candidate came from outside, a Kazakh whom nobody knew. On Sunday the whole town dressed in its best, voted early in the morning and unanimously. The same happy faces exchanged felicitations in the streets, without a twinkle in the eye.

In hard-labor camp we had openly mocked at the whole farce, but in exile you must not be too ready to share your thoughts: the exile's life is like that of the free—and the first habit of free men he adopts is the worst: their reticence. M——z was one of the few with whom I could talk about such things.

They had sent him there from Dzhezkazgan—and without a kopeck: his money had been kept back somewhere along the line. This did not worry the MVD in the least—they simply took him off the prison dole and turned him onto the streets of Kok-Terek, to steal or die, just as he pleased. That was when I lent him ten rubles and earned his gratitude forever. It was a long time before he stopped reminding me how I had saved him. One of his fixed characteristics was never forgetting a kindness. Nor an injury either. (He bore a grudge against Khudayev, for instance—the Chechen boy who had nearly fallen victim to a blood feud. But nothing stands still in this world: Khudayev, after his narrow escape, viciously and unjustly took out his spite on M——z's son.)

As an exile with no professional qualifications, M——z could not find a decent job in Kok-Terek. The best that came his way was the post of assistant in the school labs, which he greatly prized. But his post required him to be at everyone's beck and call, never to answer back, never to have a mind of his own. He did keep his thoughts to himself, he was unreachable under his outward politeness, and no one knew the first thing about him, not even why at nearly fifty he had no profession. He and I somehow became friendly, we never clashed, and quite often helped each other; our reactions and our way of expressing them, acquired in the camps, were identical. So that although he kept quiet about it for a long time, I finally learned the carefully concealed story of his public and his private past. It is instructive.

Before the war he had been secretary of the District Party Committee at Zh——, and during the war was officer in charge of the cipher section of a division. He had always held high positions, always been a person of consequence, never experienced the petty troubles of lesser folk. Then one day in 1942 one regiment in the division did not receive the order to retreat in time, and the cipher section was to blame. The mistake had to be corrected, but it also happened that all M——z's subordinates had been killed or disappeared somewhere, and the general sent M——z himself to the forward sector, into the jaws of the pincers which were already closing on the regiment. Order them to retreat! Save them! M——z went on horseback, deeply distressed and fearing for his life. On the way he found himself in such danger that he decided to go no farther, and doubted whether he would survive even where he was. He deliberately stopped, abandoned the regiment to its fate, betrayed it, dismounted, threw his arms around a tree (or hid behind it from bursting shells), and . . . and solemnly swore to Jehovah that if he lived he would be zealous in the faith and observe the holy law punctiliously. It all ended happily: every man in the regiment was killed or taken prisoner, but M——z came out alive, was sentenced to ten years in a camp under Article 58, did his time—and here he was now in Kok-Terek, with me. How rigorously he fulfilled his vow! His Communist past had left no trace in his heart or his mind. Only when his wife tricked him into it would he eat unclean fish, fish without scales. He could not avoid coming to work on Saturdays, but endeavored to do nothing while there. At home he rigorously observed all the rituals, and prayed—secretly, as Soviet circumstances demand.

Understandably, he revealed his story to very few people.

To me, it doesn't seem so very simple. The only simple thing about it is something which people in our country are particularly reluctant to accept: that the innermost core of our being is religion and not Party ideology.

How are we to judge him? Under whatever code of law you like —criminal law, military law, the laws of honor, the laws of patriotism, and the laws of the Party—this man deserved death or obloquy; he had destroyed a whole regiment to save his own life, not to mention his failure at that moment to hate as he should the most terrible enemy the Jews had ever had.

But M——z could have appealed to some higher code of law and retorted: Are not all your wars caused by the imbecility of

politicians? What made Hitler cut his way into Russia, if not imbecility—his own, and Stalin's, and Chamberlain's imbecility? And now you want to send *me* to my death? Was it *you* who brought me into the world? Some will object that he should have said this (and so then should all those in the doomed regiment!) on enlistment, when they were giving him a handsome uniform to wear, not out there with his arms around a tree. Logically I have no intention of defending him; logically I ought to have hated him, despised him, felt sick when I shook hands with him.

But *I had no such feelings* toward him. Because I had not belonged to that regiment, not felt what it was like to be in their situation? Because I suspected that a hundred other factors had combined to decide their fate? Because I had never seen M——z in his pride, but only when he was vanquished? Whatever the reason, we shook hands warmly and sincerely every day, and never once did I feel that there was anything disgraceful in it. One man can be bent into so many shapes in a lifetime! How different he may become, for himself as well as for others. And one of these different selves we readily, eagerly stone to death, obeying an order, the law, an impulse, or our blind misconception.

But what if the stone slips from your hand? What if you yourself are deep in trouble, and begin to look at things with different eyes? At the crime. At the criminal. At him *and* at yourself.

In this thick volume we have pronounced absolution so often. I hear cries of astonishment and indignation. Where do you draw the line? Must we forgive everyone?

No, I have no intention of forgiving everyone. Only those who have fallen. While the idol towers over us on his commanding eminence, his brow creased imperiously, smug and insensate, mutilating our lives—just let me have the heaviest stone! Or let a dozen of us seize a battering ram and knock him off his perch.

But once he is overthrown, once the first furrow of self-awareness runs over his face as he crashes to the ground—lay down your stones!

He is returning to humanity unaided.

Do not deny him this God-given way.

■

After the places of exile described earlier, I have to admit that we in Kok-Terek, and exiles in Southern Kazakhstan and Kirghizia

generally, were privileged. They settled us in inhabited places, that is to say, where there was water and the soil was not altogether barren (in the Chu Valley and the Kurdai district it was indeed highly fertile). Very many of us landed in towns (Dzhambul, Chimkent, Talass, even Alma-Ata or Frunze), where lack of rights made no palpable difference between us and other townspeople who had rights. Food was cheap, and work easy to find in these towns, and especially in industrial settlements, because the local population lacked all enthusiasm for industry, skilled trades, and intellectual occupations. But even those who ended in rural areas were not invariably driven into the kolkhoz. There were four thousand people in our Kok-Terek, most of them exiles, but only some Kazakh sections of the town came under a kolkhoz. The rest all managed to find jobs at the Machine and Tractor Station, or took a nominal job somewhere, even at a derisory salary, and lived on a quarter of a hectare of irrigated garden, with a cow, some pigs, and some sheep. Significantly, a group of Western Ukrainians living among us (in administrative exile after five years in the camps), and working hard building adobe houses for the local construction agency, found life on the clay soil of Kok-Terek (which burned to dust unless it was heavily irrigated, but was at least not kolkhoz land) so much more comfortable than life on the kolkhoz in their beloved and flourishing Ukraine that when the release order came they all stayed in Kok-Terek for good.

The security officers in Kok-Terek were lazy, too—one instance in which the universal Kazakh laziness was beneficial. There were a few informers among us, but we hardly noticed and came to no harm from them.

The main reason for their inactivity, however, and for the steady relaxation of discipline was the onset of the Khrushchev era. Its impact, muffled by the jolts and wobbles along the way, at last reached even us.

There was a disappointment to begin with: the "Voroshilov amnesty" (as the Archipelago called it, although it was promulgated by the Seven Boyars).* Stalin's cruel joke with the politicals on July 7, 1945, was a lesson which had not sunk in and was forgotten. Both in the camps and in exile, whispered rumors of an amnesty flourished. People have a remarkable capacity for pigheaded credulity. N. N. Grekova, for instance, a repeater with fifteen years of hell behind her, kept a picture of clear-eyed Voroshilov on the wall of her little hut, and believed that a miracle

would come from him. Well, the miracle came: it was in a decree signed by Voroshilov that the government enjoyed another laugh at our expense, on March 27, 1953.

Strictly speaking, it was impossible to invent any obvious and reasonable excuse for the grief-stricken rulers of a grief-stricken country to set criminals free just at that moment in March, 1953 —unless perhaps they were suddenly overwhelmed by a sense of the transience of all that is. Though in ancient Russia, too, so Kotoshikhin tells us, it was the custom to release criminals on the day of a Tsar's interment, which incidentally was the signal for an orgy of looting ("the Muscovites are not God-fearing by nature, they rob the male and the female sex alike of their garments in the street, and beat them to death").[1] It was just the same on this occasion. With Stalin in his grave, his successors were anxious for popularity, though their explanation connected the amnesty with "the eradication of crime in our country." (Who, then, were all those people *inside?* If it had been true, there would have been no one to release!) Since, however, they were still wearing Stalinist blinkers, still slavishly thinking along the same old lines, they amnestied thieves and gangsters, but only those 58's with "up to five years inclusive." The uninitiated, with the ways of decent governments in mind, might suppose that "up to five years" would enable three-quarters of the politicals to go home. In fact, only 1 or 2 percent of our kind had such childish sentences. (The thieves were set loose upon the local inhabitants like locusts, and it was only some time later and with considerable strain that the militia reinstalled the amnestied bandits in their old reserve.)

The amnesty had interesting repercussions in our place of exile. There were some among us who had served a "kid's sentence" (up to five years) in their time, but then instead of being allowed to go home had been exiled without trial. In Kok-Terek this was true of certain very lonely old men and women from the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia—the meekest and unhappiest people in the world. They cheered up greatly after the amnesty, and waited to be sent home. But some two months later came the usual heartless clarification: inasmuch as they had been exiled (after having served their time in the camps and without trial) not for five years but in perpetuity, the previous five-year term of

1. I quote from Plekhanov, *Istoriya Russkoi Obshchestvennoi Mysli (A History of Russian Social Thought),* Moscow, 1919, Vol. I, Part 2, Chap. 9.

imprisonment which had led to their exile did not count, and they were not covered by the amnesty. . . . Then there was Tonya Kazachuk, a completely free woman who had come from the Ukraine to join her exiled husband, and had been registered as an exile settler for the sake of tidiness. When the amnesty came she rushed to the MVD post. "Ah," they very reasonably retorted, "you didn't get five years like your husband; you're here indefinitely so the amnesty doesn't affect you."

Draco, Solon, and Justinian the lawgivers would have burst with indignation! . . .

So no one got anything out of the amnesty. But as the months went by, and especially after the fall of Beria, by slow degrees, without fanfares, genuine relaxation began creeping into the land of exile. They allowed the five-year people to go home. They began allowing the children of exiles to attend higher-educational institutions in the vicinity. At work they stopped addressing exiles with rude familiarity. Life was easier all the time! Exiles began to rise in their professions.

Vacant desks were seen in the MVD post. "That other officer —where is he?" "He doesn't work here now." The staff was being drastically reduced, thinned out. They started handling us more gently. The sacred duty to *report* ceased to be quite so sacred. If a man had not turned up by dinnertime—"Never mind, next time will do!" One national group after another had certain rights restored. Travel within the district was now unrestricted, and trips to other oblasts much freer. Rumors flew thicker and faster: "They're going to let us go home." Sure enough, they let the Turkmen go (those who were exiled for having been prisoners of war). Then the Kurds. Houses were put up for sale, and house prices tottered.

They also released some elderly administrative exiles: people had pleaded their cause in Moscow, and lo and behold, they were *rehabilitated.* Excitement rippled through the exiles, leaving them feverish and confused. "Shall we be on the move soon? Is it really possible? . . ."

Ridiculous! As though that regime could ever become any kinder. The camp had taught me to be consistent in my disbelief. And anyway, there was no special need for me to believe: here, in the great Russian heartland, I had neither family nor friends, whereas here, in exile, I was experiencing something like happiness. I doubt whether I had ever lived so comfortably.

True, during my first year of exile a deadly disease was tormenting me, as though it was in league with my jailers. And for a whole year no one in Kok-Terek could even determine what it was. I could hardly stand on my feet in front of my class. I slept badly, and ate very little. All that I had previously written in the camp and stored in my memory, and all that I had composed in exile since, I had to write down hastily and bury in the ground. (I remember clearly that night before I left for Tashkent, the last night of 1953: it seemed as though for me life, and literature, was ending right there. I felt cheated.)

But my illness abated, and my two years of truly Beautiful Exile began, with only one hardship, one sacrifice to cast a shadow: I dared not marry, because there was no woman whom I could trust with the secrets of my lonely life, my writing, my hiding places. But all my days were lived in a state of constant blissfully heightened awareness, and I felt no constraint on my freedom. At school I could give as many lessons as I wanted, in both shifts—and every lesson brought a throbbing happiness, never weariness or boredom. And every day I had a little time left for writing—and there was never any need for me to attune my thoughts: as soon as I sat down the lines raced from under my pen. On those Sundays when we were not turned out to thin beet in the kolkhoz, I wrote without pause—the whole Sunday through! While I was there I also began on a novel (impounded ten years later), and I had writing enough for a long time ahead. As for publication—that was not to be expected until after I was dead.

By now I had some money, so I bought a little clay house for myself, and ordered a firm table to write on, but I went on sleeping on the same old bare wooden boxes. I also bought a shortwave radio set, covered my windows at night, glued my ear to the silk over the speaker, and through the cascading crash of jamming tried to catch some of the forbidden news we longed for, and to reconstruct from the general sense the parts I could not hear.

We were so worn out by decades of lying nonsense, we yearned for any scrap of truth, however tattered—and yet this work was not worth the time I wasted on it: the infantile West had no riches of wisdom or courage to bestow on those of us who were nurtured by the Archipelago.

My little house stood on the extreme eastern edge of the settlement. Beyond my gate there was an irrigation channel, the steppe, and the sunrise each morning. Whenever there was a puff of wind

from the steppe, my lungs drank it in greedily. In the dusk and at night, whether it was dark or moonlit, I strolled about alone out there, inhaling and exhaling like a lunatic. There was no other dwelling less than a hundred meters off, to left, to right, or to the rear of me.

I was fully resigned to living there, if not "in perpetuity," then for twenty years at least (I did not believe that conditions of general freedom would come about sooner and I was not far wrong). I seemed to have lost all desire to go elsewhere (although my heart stood still when I looked at a map of Central Russia). I was aware of the whole world not as something beckoning to me from outside, but as something experienced and assimilated, entirely within myself, so that nothing remained for me to do but write about it.

I was replete.

When Radishchev was in exile, his friend Kutuzov wrote to him as follows: "It grieves me to tell you this, my friend, but . . . your position has its advantages. Cut off from all men, remote from all the objects that dazzle us—you can all the more profitably voyage within yourself; you can gaze upon yourself dispassionately, and consequently form less biased judgments about things at which you previously looked through a veil of ambition and worldly cares. Many things will perhaps appear to you in a completely new aspect."

Precisely so. And because I cherished the purer vision it gave me, I was fully conscious that exile was a blessing to me.

Meanwhile, the shifts and stirrings in the exile world were more and more noticeable. The MVD officers became positively kindly, and their numbers were further reduced. The nominal punishment for running away was now only five years—and even this was not imposed. One after another, national groups ceased reporting to the MVD, and then were granted the right to leave. Tremors of joy and hope disturbed our quiet exile. Suddenly, without hint or warning, yet another amnesty crept up on us—the "Adenauer amnesty" of September, 1955. This was after Adenauer had visited Moscow and stipulated that Khrushchev should free all the Germans. No sooner had Nikita ordered their release than the absurdity of the situation—releasing the Germans and holding on to their Russian collaborators with twenty-year sentences—was realized. But since these were all Polizei, headmen appointed by the Germans, or Vlasovites, no one was anxious to draw much public

attention to this amnesty. And anyway, there is a general law on the dissemination of information in our country: trivialities are shouted from the rooftops, important news stealthily leaked. So that the biggest of all political amnesties since the October Revolution marked no special day, and was proclaimed on September 9 in a single newspaper—*Izvestiya*—and even there on an inside page, with no comment whatsoever, not a single article to keep it company.

How could I help being agitated? I read it: "Amnesty for persons who collaborated with the Germans." Where did that leave me? Apparently it did not apply to me: I had served in the Red Army throughout. To hell with you, then—so much the less to worry about. Then my friend L. Z. Kopelev wrote from Moscow: he had flourished this amnesty in a Moscow militia station and talked them into giving him a temporary residence permit. Shortly after, they had sent for him. "What's the idea, trying to bamboozle us? You weren't a collaborator, were you?" "No." "And you did serve in the Soviet Army?" "Yes." "Right; get the hell out of Moscow within twenty-four hours." He stayed where he was, of course, but "after nine in the evening I'm on tenterhooks—every ring of the bell, I think they've come for me!"

I thought with pleasure how much better off I was! Once I'd hidden my manuscripts (I did this every evening), I slept like a babe.

From my clean desert I imagined the teeming, fretful, vainglorious capital—and felt no urge at all to go there.

My Moscow friends, however, insisted. "Why have you taken it into your head to stay there? . . . Ask for a judicial review. They have started reconsidering cases!"

Why should I? . . . Where I was, I could spend a whole hour watching the ants who had bored a hole in the mud-brick foundations of my house without foremen, warders, or commanders of Camp Divisions; carrying loads of husks for their winter store. One morning they suddenly failed to appear, although the ground outside the house was strewn with husks. As it turned out, they had anticipated long before, they *knew,* that there would be rain that day, although the cheerful sunny sky gave no warning. After the rain the clouds were still heavy and black, but they crept out to work: they knew for sure that it would not rain again.

There, in the silence of exile, I could see with perfect certainty the true course of Pushkin's life. His first piece of good fortune was

his banishment to the south, his second and greatest his banishment to Mikhailovskoye. There he should have lived, and gone on living, instead of hankering for other places. What fatal compulsion drew him to Petersburg? What fatality prompted him to marry? . . .

Still, it is difficult for a human heart to follow where reason leads. Difficult for a wood chip not to sail with the pouring stream.

The Twentieth Congress arrived. For a long time we knew nothing about Khrushchev's speech. (They started reading it to some people in Kok-Terek, but kept it secret from the exiles, and we learned about it from the BBC.) But Mikoyan's words in an ordinary open newspaper were enough for me: "This is the first Leninist Congress" . . . since such and such a year. I knew that my enemy Stalin had fallen, which meant that I was on the way up.

And so . . . I applied for a review of my case.

Then, in spring, they lifted sentences of exile from all 58's.

In my weakness I abandoned my crystalline exile. And went into the turbid outside world.

The feelings of a former zek as he crosses the Volga from east to west to travel all day in a clanking train over the wooded Russian plain do not form part of this chapter.

In Moscow that summer, I phoned the Public Prosecutor's Office to ask how my appeal was going. They asked me to call another number—and the cordial, unassuming voice of an interrogator invited me to look in at the Lubyanka for a chat. In the famous office on Kuznetsky Most where passes were issued, they told me to wait. Suspecting that somebody's eyes were already on me, studying my face, in spite of my inner tension I put on a look of good-natured weariness and pretended to be watching a child who was playing, with no enjoyment at all, in the middle of the waiting room. Just as I thought! My new investigating officer was standing there in civilian clothes, observing me! When he had satisfied himself that I was not a white-hot enemy, he came up and very amiably took me to the Big Lubyanka. While we were still on the way, he was full of regrets that my life had been so horribly messed up (by whom?), that I had been denied wife and children. But the stuffy, electric-lighted corridors of the Lubyanka had not changed since I had been taken through them with shaven skull,

hungry, sleepless, buttonless, hands behind my back. "What a brute of an investigator you got, that Yezepov. I remember his name; he's been demoted since." (He was probably sitting in the next room and calling my man names. . . .) "I was in counterespionage, the naval branch of SMERSH. We didn't have people like that!" (Ryumin was one of yours. You had Levshin and Libin.) But I nodded innocently: of course you didn't. He even laughed at my 1944 witticisms about Stalin: "You put it very neatly!" He praised the stories I had written at the front, which were on the file as incriminating evidence. "There's nothing anti-Soviet in them! Take them if you like, try and get them published." But I refused in a feeble, almost expiring, voice. "Heavens, no, I've given up literature long ago. If I live another few years, my dream is to study physics." (Seasonal camouflage! This is the game we shall play from now on.)

Spare the rod and spoil the . . . man. Prison was bound to teach us something. If only how to behave in front of the Cheka-GB.*

Chapter 7

■

Zeks at Liberty

We have had a chapter in this book on "Arrest." Do we need one now called "Release"?

Of those on whom the thunderbolt of arrest at one time or another fell (I shall speak only of 58's), I doubt whether a fifth, I should like to think that an eighth lived to experience this "release."

And anyway, release is surely something everybody understands. It has been described so often in world literature, shown in so many films: unlock my dungeon—out into the sunshine—the crowd goes wild—open-armed relatives.

But there is a curse on those "released" under the joyless sky of the Archipelago, and as they move into freedom the clouds will grow darker.

Only in its long-windedness, its leisureliness, its otiose flourishes (what need has the law to hurry now?), does release differ from the lightning stroke of arrest. In all other respects, release is arrest all over again, the same sort of punishing transition from state to state, shattering your breast, the structure of your life and your ideas, and promising nothing in return.

If arrest is like the swift touch of frost on a liquid surface, release is the uncertain half-thaw between two frosts.

Between two arrests.

Because in this country, whenever someone is released, somewhere an arrest must follow.

The space between two arrests—that is what release meant throughout the forty pre-Khrushchev years.

A life belt thrown between two islands—splash your way from camp to camp! . . .

The wait between the very first day and the very last—that's what a *stretch* means. The walk from one camp boundary to the next—that's what is meant by release.

Your muddy green passport, which the poet so insistently bade all men envy,* is smirched with Article 39 of the law on passports, in black indelible ink. This means that you will not be given a residence permit in a town, even a small one, nor will you ever get a decent job. In the camp at least you received your rations, but here you do not.

Moreover, your freedom of movement is illusory. . . .

Not "released," but "deprived of exile" would be the best description of these unfortunates. Denied the blessings of an exile decreed by fate, they cannot force themselves to go into the Krasnoyarsk taiga or the Kazakh desert, where there are so many of their own kind, so many *exes*, all around. No, they plunge deep into the tormented world of *freedom*, where everyone recoils from them, and where they are marked men, candidates for a new spell inside.

Natalya Ivanovna Stolyarova was discharged from Karlag on April 27, 1945. She could not go away immediately: she had to obtain a passport, she had no bread card, nowhere to live, the only work offered was splitting logs for firewood. When she had gone through the few rubles collected by friends inside, Stolyarova returned to the camp gates, told the guards some tale about coming to fetch her things (the local customs were patriarchal), and . . . went home to her hut! There never was such happiness! Her friends flocked around, brought her gruel from the kitchen (oh, how nice it tasted!), laughed and listened to her stories about how lost and homeless she had been outside. No, thanks—we're more comfortable here. Roll call. One too many! . . . The duty officer scolded, but let her stay in camp overnight (May Day eve), as long as she pushed off in the morning!

Stolyarova had worked hard in the camp, never eased up. (She had come to the Soviet Union from Paris when she was quite young, had been put inside shortly afterward, and had been longing to be freed so that she could see something of her Motherland!) As a reward for her "good work" she had been discharged on privileged terms: she was not assigned to any specified locality. Those who were sent to a particular place found jobs somehow: the militia could not chase them off else-

where. But Stolyarova, with her "clean" certificate of discharge, was like a dog turned out of doors. Wherever she went, the militia refused to register her. Moscow families she knew well would make tea for her, but no one offered her a bed. She spent her nights at the stations. (It was bad enough that militiamen walked around all night to prevent people from sleeping, and turned them out before dawn so that the floors could be swept—but that was not all: any discharged zek whose path has ever lain through a big station will remember how his heart sank at the approach of a militiaman. How stern he looks! His nose, of course, tells him that you are a former zek! Any moment now he'll ask for your papers! He will take away your discharge certificate—and that's it, you're a zek again. For us rights, laws, even the human being himself, are nothing: the document is everything! Any minute now he'll lay hands on your certificate—and that's that. . . . These are our feelings. . . .) Stolyarova wanted to take a job in Luga, knitting gloves—not for toilers generally, mind you, just for German prisoners of war! Not only would they not take her, but the boss insulted her, with everyone listening. "Trying to worm her way into our organization! We know their sly tricks! We've read our Sheinin!" (Oh, that fat Sheinin! If he had any shame, he'd hang himself!)

It's a vicious circle: no job without a residence permit, no residence permit unless you have a job. And without a job you have no bread card either. Former zeks did not know the rule that the MVD is required to find them work. And those who did know were afraid to apply in case they were *put back inside*. . . .

You may be free, but your troubles are only beginning.

In my student days, there was a strange professor at Rostov University called N. A. Trifonov. His head was always pulled into his shoulders, he was always tense and jumpy, he didn't like people calling to him in the corridor. We learned later that he had *been inside*—and if anybody called out his name in the corridor he thought perhaps the security officers had sent for him.

At the Rostov Medical Institute after the war, a doctor discharged from a camp preferred not to wait for the second arrest he thought inevitable, and committed suicide. Anyone who has sampled the camps, who *knows* them, may very well make this choice. It is no harder.

Really unlucky were those who were released *too soon!* Avenir

Borisov's turn came in 1946. He went not to some big town but to his native settlement. All his old friends, people he had grown up with, tried to avoid him in the street, or to pass by without speaking (and these were yesterday's fearless front-line soldiers!); if conversation was quite unavoidable they made a few carefully noncommittal remarks as they edged away. *Nobody* ever asked him how life had treated him all those years (although most of us probably know less about the Archipelago than about Central Africa!). (Will our descendants ever realize how well trained our *free* citizens were!) However, one old friend of his student days did invite him to tea in the evening, after dark. Such friendliness! Such warmth! There can be no thaw without latent heat! Avenir asked to see some old photographs and his friend got out the albums for him. The friend had *forgotten*—and was surprised when Avenir suddenly rose and left without waiting for the samovar. Imagine Avenir's feelings when he saw his own face inked out in all the photographs![1]

Later on, Avenir moved up in the world a little, and became superintendent of an orphanage. Those growing up under his care were the children of soldiers, and they shed tears of outrage when the children of well-off parents called their superintendent "the jailer." (There is never anyone around to explain: their parents ought rather to be called the jailers, and Avenir the jail*ee*. In the last century the Russian people would never have shown such insensitivity to its own language!)

Although he was in under Article 58, Kartel was *administratively discharged* from a camp in 1943 with pulmonary consumption. He had a black mark in his passport—he could not live in any town, could not get work, he could only die slowly—and everyone shunned him. Then . . . the recruiting commission arrived in a hurry, looking for men to fight. Although he had tuberculosis in an advanced form, Kartel declared himself fit: he would perish among his peers! He served at the front almost till the end of the war. Only in the hospital did the eye of the Third Section detect an enemy of the people in this self-sacrificing soldier! In 1949 he was marked down for arrest as a repeater, but good people in the military registration department came to his help.

1. Five years later the friend put the blame for this on his wife: she had inked over the photographs. Ten years after that (in 1961) the wife came to Avenir in the district trade union committee to ask for a pass to go to Sochi. He gave it to her, and she reminisced effusively about their former friendship.

In the Stalin years the best way to be *released* was to go through the gates and stay right there. Such people were already known at work and were given jobs. Even the MVD men, when they met them in the street, looked on them as people who had passed the test.

Not always, though. When Prokhorov-Pustover was released in 1938 he stayed on at Bamlag as a free engineer. Rosenblit, the head of the Security Section, told him: "You've been released, but remember you'll be walking a tightrope. One little slip, and you're a zek again. *We shouldn't even have to put you on trial.* So watch your step—and don't start imagining that you're a free citizen."

Sensible zeks of this sort, who stayed on near the camps, voluntarily choosing prison as a variety of freedom, can still be found in hundreds of thousands out in the backwoods, in such places as the Nyrob or Narym districts. And if they have to go inside again —it's less trouble; it's just next door.

On the Kolyma there was really not much choice: they *hung on to* people. The discharged zek immediately signed a *voluntary* undertaking to go on working for Dalstroi. (Permission to leave for the mainland was even harder to obtain than your discharge.) N. V. Surovtseva, for instance, was unlucky enough to reach the end of her sentence. Only yesterday she had worked in the children's settlement, where she was warm and well fed, but now she was turned out to work in the fields, because there was nothing else. Only yesterday she was assured of her bed and her rations, and now she had neither rations nor a roof over her head; she found her way to a ruined house with rotten floors (this on the Kolyma!). She was thankful for her friends in the children's settlement: for a long time after her release they went on "slipping" her food. "The oppressive burden of freedom"—that is how she described her new experiences. Only gradually did she get on her feet, to become in the end . . . a house owner! See her proudly standing outside a shack which some dogs would not wish to own (Plate No. 6).

(In case the reader thinks that all this is true only of the unspeakable Kolyma, let us move over to Vorkuta and look at a typical VGS [Temporary Civil Construction] hut, of the sort in which comfortable members of the free population—former zeks, of course—are housed [Plate No. 7].)

So that release can easily mean something much worse than it did for M. P. Yakubovich. A prison just outside Karaganda was

fitted out as a home for invalids—the Tikhonov home—and he was "released" into it, under surveillance and without the right to leave.

Rudkovsky, when no one would have him ("I suffered just as much as I had in the camps"), went to the virgin lands, near Kustanai ("You meet all sorts of people there"). . . . I. V. Shved lost his hearing, assembling trains at Norilsk in the fiercest blizzards; later he worked as a stoker twelve hours a day. But he lacked the necessary certificates. The social security officials shrugged their shoulders. "Can you produce witnesses?" Well, there were the walruses. . . . I. S. Karpunich had done twenty years on the Kolyma, and was worn out and sick. But at the age of sixty he still hadn't "twenty-five years of paid employment" behind him —so no pension. The longer a man had been in the camps, the sicker he was, the shorter his service record, and the slimmer his chances of a pension.

We have, of course, no Prisoners Aid Society, as they do in England. It is frightening even to think of anything so heretical.[2]

People write to me that "camp was one day in the life of Ivan Denisovich—and being back outside was another."

But wait a minute! Surely, since then, the sun of freedom has risen? Surely hands have reached out to the hapless: *"It will never happen again."* Surely tears have even dripped onto the platforms of Party Congresses?

Zhukov (from Kovrov): "Though I'm still not on my feet, I can more or less kneel now." But "we are still labeled convicts, and when staffs are reduced we're the first to go. . . ." P. G. Tikhonov: "I'm rehabilitated and work in a research institute, but it still feels like a continuation of the camp. Blockheads just like our bosses in the camps" still have power over him. . . . G. F. Popov: "Whatever anybody says, or writes, my colleagues only have to learn that I've been inside, and they start 'accidentally' turning their backs on me."

2. Nowadays the same sort of thing happens to *bytoviki* (nonpolitical offenders). A. I. Burlake went to the Ananiev district Party headquarters: "This is not an appointments bureau"; to the District Attorney's Office: "That's not our job"; and to the town soviet: "You'll have to wait." He was without work for five months (1964). At Novorossiisk (in 1965) they immediately made P. K. Yegorov sign an undertaking to leave the town in twenty-four hours. In the City Executive Committee's office he showed them a camp commendation for "excellent work"—and they laughed. The secretary of the City Party Committee simply threw him out. He went away, bribed somebody, and stayed in Novorossiisk.

Yes, the devil is strong! Our Fatherland is like this: to shove it a yard or two along the road to tyranny, a frown, a little cough, is enough. But to drag it an inch along the road to freedom you must harness a hundred oxen and keep after each of them with a cudgel: "Watch where you're pulling! Watch where you're going!"

What about the formalities of rehabilitation? Ch——, an old woman, receives a brusque summons: "Report to the militia at 10 A.M. tomorrow." Nothing more! Her daughter hurries there with the summons that evening. "I'm afraid for her; this could kill her. What's it all about? What should I prepare her for?" "Don't be afraid—it's something *that will please her:* her late husband has been rehabilitated." (But perhaps the news will be like wormwood to her? That would never occur to her benefactors.)

If these are the forms which our *mercy* takes, just imagine what our cruelty is like!

What an avalanche of rehabilitations there was! But even this could not crack the stony brow of our infallible society! For the avalanche fell not on the road along which you need only frown, but on that for which you must harness a thousand oxen.

"Rehabilitation was just a stunt!" Party bosses will tell you so frankly. *"Far too many were rehabilitated!"*

Voldemar Zarin (Rostov-on-the-Don) did fifteen years and meekly held his tongue for another eight. Then in 1960 he thought it right to tell his fellow employees how bad things were in the camps. He was put under investigation, and a KGB major told him: *"Rehabilitation does not mean that you were innocent,* only that your crimes were not all that serious. *But there's always a bit left over!"*

In Riga, also in 1960, Petropavlovsky's colleagues to a man joined in making his life a misery for three months on end, because he had concealed the fact that his father had been shot . . . in 1937!

Komogor is at a loss. "Who is supposed to be in the right nowadays, and who is guilty? Where do I put myself when some plugugly suddenly starts talking about equality and fraternity?"

After his rehabilitation Markelov became—of all things—chairman of an industrial insurance council, or putting it simply, of the trade union branch in a cooperative enterprise. The chairman of the enterprise would not risk leaving this chosen of the people alone in his office for a single minute! And Bayev, secretary of the Party Bureau, who was simultaneously *in charge of personnel,* to be on the safe side intercepted all mail intended for Mar-

kelov as head of the trade union committee. "There's a piece of paper about midterm elections to local committees—has it come your way?" "Yes, there was something a month ago." "Well, I need it!" "Here you are, then—read it, but be quick; it's nearly time to go home!" "Look, it's addressed to me! I'll let you have it back tomorrow!" "What are you talking about—it's an *official document.*" Put yourself in Markelov's shoes, with a thug like Bayev over you; imagine that your salary and residence permit depend entirely on the said Bayev—and fill your lungs with the air of freedom!

Deyeva, a schoolteacher, was dismissed for "immorality": she had lowered the dignity of her calling by marrying . . . a discharged convict (a pupil of hers in the camp)!

And this was under Khrushchev, not Stalin.

You have nothing concrete to show for your past except the *Certificate.*

A small sheet of paper, 12 centimeters by 18. Declaring the living "rehabilitated" and the dead "dead." The date of decease there is no way of checking. Death occurred at—a big capital "Z" (meaning "in prison"). Cause of death—you can leaf through a hundred of them and find the same "disease of the day."[3] Sometimes the names of (bogus) witnesses are added.

While the real witnesses all remain silent.

We . . . are silent.

From whom can future generations learn anything? The door is locked, nailed up; the cracks papered over. . . .

"Even the young," Verbovsky complains, "look upon the rehabilitated with suspicion and contempt."

Not all of them, though. The majority of young people could not care less whether we have been rehabilitated or not, whether twelve million people are still inside or are inside no longer; they do not see that it affects them. Just so long as they themselves are at liberty, with their tape recorders and their disheveled girl friends.

A fish does not campaign against fisheries—it only tries to slip through the mesh.

3. Young Ch——na asked an unsuspecting girl to show her all forty cards in a batch. On every one the same liver complaint had been entered in the same handwriting! . . . And then there was this sort of thing: "Your husband [Aleksandr Petrovich Malyavko-Vysotsky] died before he could be brought to trial, and cannot therefore be rehabilitated."

■

Just as a common illness develops differently in different people, the effects of freedom upon us varied greatly, as closer inspection will show.

Its physical effects, to begin with . . . Some had overstrained themselves in the fight to end their time in the camps alive. They had endured it all like men of steel, consuming for ten whole years a fraction of what the body requires; working and slaving; breaking stones half-naked in freezing weather—and never catching cold. But once their sentence was served, once the inhuman pressure from outside was lifted, the tension inside them also slackened. Such people are destroyed by a sudden drop in pressure. The giant Chulpenyov, who had never caught cold in seven years as a lumberjack, contracted a variety of illnesses once he was freed. . . . G. A. Sorokin: "After rehabilitation my mental health, which had been the envy of my comrades in the camp, steadily deteriorated. A succession of neuroses and psychoses . . ." Igor Kaminov: "After my release I weakened and went to pieces, and I seem to find things much harder outside."

There used to be a saying: The hard times brace you, and the soft times drive you to drink. Sometimes a man's teeth would all fall out in a year. Sometimes he would grow old overnight. Another man's strength would give out as soon as he got home, and he would die burned out.

Yet there were others who took heart when they were released. For them, it was time to grow younger and spread their wings. (I, for one, still look younger than I did in the first photograph I had taken in exile.) It comes as a sudden revelation: life after all is so *easy* when you're free! There, on the Archipelago, the force of gravity is quite different, your legs are as heavy as an elephant's, but here they move as nimbly as a sparrow's. All the problems which tease and torment men who have always been free we solve with a single click of the tongue. We have our own cheerful standards: "Things have been worse!" Things used to be worse—so now everything is quite easy. We never get tired of repeating it: Things have been worse! Things have been worse!

But the pattern of a man's future may be even more firmly drawn by the emotional crisis which he undergoes at the moment of release. This crisis can take very different forms. Only on the threshold of the guardhouse do you begin to feel that what you

are leaving behind you is both your prison and your homeland. This was your spiritual birthplace, and a secret part of your soul will remain here forever—while your feet trudge on into the dumb and unwelcoming expanse of *freedom.*

The camps bring out a man's character—but so does release! This is how Vera Alekseyevna Korneyeva, whom we have met before in our story, took leave of a Special Camp in 1951. "The five-meter gates closed behind me, and although I could hardly believe it myself, I was weeping as I walked out to freedom. Weeping for what? . . . I felt as though I had torn my heart away from what was dearest and most precious to it, from my comrades in misfortune. The gates closed—and it was all finished. I should never see those people again, never receive any news from them. *It was as though I had passed on to the next world. . . .*"

To the next world! . . . Release as a form of death. Perhaps we had not been released? Perhaps we had died, to begin a completely new life beyond the grave? A somewhat ghostly existence, in which we cautiously felt the objects about us, trying to identify them.

Release into *the world of the living* had of course been thought of quite differently. We had pictured it as Pushkin did: "And your brothers shall return your sword to you."* But such happiness is the lot of very few generations of prisoners.

It was as though our freedom was stolen, not authentic. Those who felt like this seized their scrap of stolen freedom and ran with it to some lonely place. "While in the camp almost all my closest comrades thought, as I did, that if ever God allowed us to leave the camp alive, we would not live in towns, or even in villages, but somewhere in the depths of the forest. We would find work as foresters, rangers, or failing that, as herdsmen, and stay as far away as we could from people, politics, and all the snares and delusions of the world." (V. V. Pospelov) For some time after he was discharged Avenir Borisov shunned other people and took refuge in the countryside. "I felt like hugging and kissing every birch tree, every poplar. The rustle of fallen leaves (I was released in autumn) was like music to me, and tears came to my eyes. I didn't give a damn that I only got 500 grams of bread—I could listen to the silence for hours on end, and read books, too. Any sort of work seemed easy and simple now that I was free, the days flew by like hours, my thirst for life was unquenchable. If there is any happiness in the world at all, it is certainly that which comes

to any zek in the first year of his life as a free man!"

It is a long time before people like this want to *own* anything: they remember that property is easily lost, vanishes into thin air. They have an almost superstitious aversion to new things, go on wearing the same old clothes, sitting on the same old broken chairs. One friend of mine had furniture so rickety that there was nothing you could safely sit or lean on. They made a joke of it. "This is the way to live—between camps." (His wife had also been inside.)

L. Kopelev came back to Moscow in 1955 and made a discovery: "I am ill-at-ease with successful people! I keep up an acquaintance only with those of my former friends who are in some way unlucky."

But then, only those who decline to scramble up the career ladder are interesting as human beings. Nothing is more boring than a man with a career.

But people vary. And many crossed the line to freedom with quite different feelings (especially in the days when the Cheka-KGB seemed to be closing its eyes a little). Hurrah! I'm free! One thing I solemnly swear: Never to land inside again! Now I'm going all out to make up for what I've missed.

Some want to make up for the appointments they should have held, some for the titles (learned or military) they might have won, some for the money they could have earned and salted away (it is considered bad taste among us to talk about salaries or savings accounts, but this does not mean people don't keep track). Others want to make up for their unborn children. Others, well . . . Valentin M. swore to us in jail that when he got out he would *make up* for all the girls he had missed, and true enough, for some years on end he spent his days at work and all his evenings, even in midweek, with girls, different girls all the time; he slept only four or five hours a night, became wizened and old. Others want to catch up on meals, or furniture or clothes (to forget how their buttons were cut off, how their best things were damaged beyond repair in the sterilization rooms of bathhouses). Once again buying becomes their favorite occupation.

How can you blame them when they have indeed missed so much? When such a large slice has been cut out of their lives?

There are these two reactions to freedom and, corresponding to them, two attitudes to the past.

You have lived through years of horror. You are not a foul

murderer, not a dirty swindler—so why should you try to forget prison and labor camp? Why need you be ashamed of them? Wouldn't it pay you to think yourself the richer for them? Wouldn't it be more fitting to take pride in them?

Yet so many (some of them neither weak nor stupid, people of whom you would not expect it) do their best *to forget!* To forget as quickly as they can! To forget utterly and finally! To forget as though it had never happened!

Y. G. Vendelstein: "As a rule you try not to remember—it's a defensive reflex." Pronman: "To be honest, I didn't want to meet former inhabitants of the camps and be reminded of things." S. A. Lesovik: "When I returned from the camp I tried not to remember the past. And you know, I very nearly succeeded" (until she read *One Day*). S. A. Bondarin (I had known for a long time that in 1945 he had been in the same cell in the Lubyanka before me; I offered to give him the names not only of our cellmates, but of those with whom he had previously shared a cell, people I had never known at all—and this is the answer I got): "I've tried to forget all those who were inside with me." (After that I did not, of course, even trouble to answer him.)

I can understand the orthodox avoiding old acquaintances from the camps: they are sick of barking one against a hundred; their memories are too painful. In any case, what would they want with those unclean philistines? And how can they call themselves loyal Communists, unless they forget and forgive and return to their former condition? After all, they had humbly petitioned for it four times a year: Take me back! Take me back! I've been good and I will be good![4] What did *going back* mean to them? Above all, recovering their Party cards. Their service records. Their seniority. Their merit awards.

> Vindicated—and as I take back my Party card
> A sun-warmed breeze caresses me.

Camp experience is a scummy contagion of which they must quickly swab themselves clean. Sift it, sluice it as long as you like —you will find not the tiniest grain of precious metal in your camp experience.

Take the old Leningrad Bolshevik Vasilyev. He had done two

4. This was their cry when they came pouring out in 1956: they brought with them the stale air of the thirties, just as though they had opened a stuffy chest, and hoped to start just where they had left off when they were arrested.

tenners, each with a five-year "muzzle" (deprivation of civil rights). He was given a special pension by the republic. "I am fully provided for. All praise to my Party and my people." (Wonderful words: there has been nothing like this since Job glorified God: for his sores, the loss of his cattle, the famine, the deaths of his children, his humiliations—blessed be Thy name!) But he is no loafer, this Vasilyev, no mere passenger: "I am a member of a commission for combating parasitism." In other words, he putters away as far as his aging powers permit, contributing to one of the worst legal abuses of the day. There you see it—the face of Righteousness! . . .

It is equally understandable that stoolies have no wish to remember, or to meet people: they fear exposure and reproach.

But what about the rest? Aren't they taking servility too far? Is it a voluntary pledge they make, for fear of landing inside again? Nastenka V., who landed in jail with a bullet wound, presses her fists to her temples and exclaims: "I want to forget it all like a hallucination, to escape from nightmarish visions of my past in those hellish camps." How could the classical scholar A.D., whose normal occupation was pondering over episodes in ancient history —how could even he command himself to "forget it all"? If he can do that, will he ever understand anything in the whole history of mankind?

Yevgeniya D., talking to me in 1965 about her spell in the Lubyanka in 1921, before her marriage, added: "But I never said a thing about it to my late husband—I *forgot.*" Forgot? Forgot to tell the person closest to her, the person with whom she shared her life? Perhaps we need to be jailed more often!

Or do you think I judge too harshly? Perhaps this is just the normal behavior of average human beings? Proverbs, after all, are made up about people: "If there's good luck tomorrow you'll forget all your sorrow." "As the paunch grows, the memory goes." Yes, men lose their shape—and their memories!

My friend and co-defendant Nikolai V.—the puerile efforts that put us behind bars were as much his as mine—thought of his whole past as a curse, as the shameful failure of a foolish man. He plunged into scholarship, the safest of all occupations, hoping to mend his fortunes. In 1959 I started talking to him about Pasternak, who was still alive but hemmed in by his persecutors. He didn't want to hear about it. "Never mind about all that rot. Just let me tell you about the *fight I'm having* in my department!" (He

was always locking horns with somebody, looking for promotion.) Yet the tribunal had thought him worth ten years in the camps. Perhaps one good flogging was all he deserved?

Then there was Grigory M——z: he was discharged, his conviction was declared null and void, he was rehabilitated, they gave him his Party card back. (Nobody, of course, stops to ask whether you have started believing in Jehovah or Mohammed in the meantime; nobody entertains the possibility that not one particle of your old beliefs has survived all that time—here, take your Party card!) He passed through my town on his way back from Kazakhstan to his native Zh——, and I met his train. What was he thinking of now? Hold on—could he be hoping to get back into some Secret or Special or Specialist Section? Our conversation was rather disjointed. He never wrote me another line. . . .

Or take F. Retz. Nowadays he is the head of a housing bureau, and also a member of a volunteer patrol for assisting the militia. He talks self-importantly about his present life. And although he hasn't forgotten his old life—who could forget eighteen years on the Kolyma?—he talks about the Kolyma with much less feeling, wonderingly, as though not sure that it all really happened. Surely it couldn't have happened. . . . He has shed his past. He is sleek and satisfied with the world at large.

The thief who *goes straight* and the ersatz political who *forgets* are much alike. Now that they are back in the fold, the world becomes comfortable again; it neither prickles nor pinches. Just as they used to think that *everyone was inside,* they now think that no one is inside. May Day and the anniversary of the Revolution regain their old, comfortable meaning—they are no longer those grim days on which we stood in the cold to be searched with more than the ordinary sadistic thoroughness, and were packed in greater numbers than usual into the congested cells of the camp jail. But never mind these grand occasions. If during his day's work the head of the family is praised by his bosses—it's a red-letter day, and dinner will be a feast.

Only at home with his family does the sometime martyr permit himself an occasional grumble. Only there does he occasionally *remember,* to make them fuss over him and appreciate him the more. Once through the door—he has *forgotten* again.

We must, however, not be so unbending. It is of course a universal human characteristic: a man returns after hurtful experiences to his old self, to many of his old (not necessarily admirable) ways

and habits. This is a manifestation of the stability of his personality, his genetic pattern. If it were not so, man would probably not be man. The same Taras Shevchenko whose despairing verses were quoted earlier[5] wrote joyfully ten years later that "not a single lineament in my inner self has changed. I thank my almighty Creator with all my heart and soul that He has not allowed my horrible experience to touch my beliefs with its iron claws."

But *how* do they manage to *forget?* Where can the art be learned? . . .

"No!" writes M. I. Kalinina. "Nothing is forgotten, and nothing in my life will come right. It gives me no pleasure to be as I am. I may be doing well at work, everything can be going smoothly in my home life—yet something endlessly gnaws at my heart, and I feel a boundless weariness. You will not, I hope, write that people discharged from camps have forgotten it all and are happy?"

Raisa Lazutina: "They tell us we shouldn't remember the bad things. But what if there is *nothing* good to remember? . . ."

Tamara Prytkova: "I was inside for twelve years, and although I've been free for eleven years since then I *simply cannot see the point of living.* I cannot see that there is any justice."

For two centuries Europe has been prating about equality—but how very different we all are! How unlike are the furrows life leaves on our souls. We can forget nothing in eleven years—or forget everything the day after. . . .

Ivan Dobryak: "It's all behind me—but not quite all. I have been rehabilitated, but there's no peace for me. There are not many weeks when I sleep peacefully—I keep dreaming of the camp. I jump up in tears, or somebody takes fright and wakes me up."

Ans Bernshtein dreams of nothing but the camp after eleven years. For five years I myself was always a prisoner in my dreams, never a free man. L. Kopelev fell ill fourteen years after his discharge—and in his delirium he was back in jail immediately. "Cabin" and "ward" are words our tongues cannot pronounce at all—it's always "cell."

Shavirin: "To this day I cannot look calmly at German shepherd dogs."

Chulpenyov walks through a wood, but he cannot simply

5. Part III, Chapter 19.

breathe deeply and enjoy himself: "I look at the pine trees; oh, they're good ones, these, not too knotty, hardly any trimmings to burn; they'll make neat blocks. . . ."

How can you forget if you settle in the village of Miltsevo, where nearly half the inhabitants have passed through the camps, most of them, it's true, for thieving. As you approach Ryazan station, you see that the fence is broken and three stakes are missing. Nobody ever repairs the hole—they seem to want it like that. Because the Stolypin cars stop exactly opposite this stop—they still do, they stop there to this day! The Black Marias are backed up to the gap and the zeks are pushed through it. (This is less awkward than taking zeks across a crowded platform.) You are asked to give a lecture (1957) by the All-Union Society for the Dissemination of Ignorance, and find that the order is made out for Corrective Labor Colony No. 2—a women's division attached to the prison. You go to the guardhouse, and a familiar cap appears at the judas window. You walk with the education officer across the prison yard, and shabby, dejected women keep greeting you obsequiously before you can greet them. Now you are closeted with the head of the Political Section, and while he entertains you, you know that out there they are driving women out of their cells, rousing the sleepers, snatching saucepans from those using the individual kitchen: Off you go, to the lecture, and look sharp about it! They round up enough to fill the hall. The hall is damp, the corridors are damp, the cells are probably damper still—and the unfortunate women laborers cough all through my lecture: loud, heavy, chronic coughing, short barking coughs, tearing gasping coughs. They are dressed not like women but like caricatures of women; the young ones are as angular and bony as old women, and they are all worn out and wishing my lecture would end. I feel ashamed. How I wish I could dissolve in smoke and vanish. Instead of these "achievements of science and technology," I want to cry out to them: "Women! How long can this go on? . . ." My eye immediately picks out some fresh-looking, well-dressed women, some of them even wearing jumpers. These are the trusties. If I let my gaze rest on them and do not listen to the coughing, I can get through the lecture quite smoothly. They listen eagerly, never taking their eyes off me . . . but I know that they are paying no heed to what I say, that it isn't the cosmos they are interested in: it's simply that they rarely see a man and so are looking me over carefully. . . . I start imagining things: any minute now my

pass will be taken away and I shall have to stay here. And these walls, only a few meters away from a street I know well, from a familiar trolley-bus stop, will shut me off from life forever, will become, not walls, but years. . . . No, no, I shall be leaving shortly! For forty kopecks I shall ride home on the trolley bus and there I shall eat a tasty supper. But I must not forget: they will all be staying here. They will go on coughing like that. Coughing for endless years.

Each year on the anniversary of my arrest I organize myself a "zek's day": in the morning I cut off 650 grams of bread, put two lumps of sugar in a cup and pour hot water on them. For lunch I ask them to make me some broth and a ladleful of thin mush. And how quickly I get back to my old form: by the end of the day I am already picking up crumbs to put in my mouth, and licking the bowl. The old sensations start up vividly.

I had also brought out with me, and still keep, my number patches. Am I the only one? In some homes they will be shown to you like holy relics.

Once I was walking down Novoslobodskaya Street. The Butyrki Prison! "Parcels Reception Room." I went in. It was full, mostly of women, but there were men, too. Some were handing over parcels, others standing and talking. So this was where our parcels had come from! How interesting! With an air of complete innocence, I went over to read the rules. But a fat-faced sergeant major marked me with his eagle eye and strode toward me. "What do you want, citizen?" His nose told him that this was not a man with a parcel, but a man up to tricks. Obviously I still had a convict smell about me!

Should we visit the dead? Your own dead, lying where you, too, should be lying, run through with a bayonet? A. Y. Olenyev, an old man by then, went in 1965. With rucksack and stick, he made his way to the former Medical Section, and from there up the hill (near the settlement of Kerki), where the burial ground was. The hillside was full of skulls and bones, and nowadays the inhabitants call it "Bone Hill."

In a remote northern town, where there is half a year of daylight and a half year of night, lives Galya V. She has nobody in all the world, and what she calls home is one corner of a nasty, noisy room. Her recreation is to take a book to a restaurant, order wine, and spend her time drinking, smoking, and "grieving for Russia." Her best-loved friends are café musicians and doormen. "Many

people who come back from *you know where* conceal their past. I am proud of my life story."

Associations of former zeks gather once a year, varying the place from time to time, to drink and reminisce. "And strangely enough," says V. P. Golitsyn, "the pictures of the past conjured up are by no means all dark and harrowing; we have many warm and pleasant memories."

Another normal human characteristic. And not the worst.

"My identification number in camp began with *yery,* V. L. Ginzburg rapturously informs me. "And the passport they issued to me was in the 'Zk' series!"

You read it—and feel a warm glow. No, honestly—however many letters you receive, those from zeks stand out unmistakably. Such extraordinary toughness they show! Such clarity of purpose combined with such vigor and determination! In our day, if you get a letter completely free from self-pity, genuinely optimistic—it can only be from a former zek. They are used to the worst the world can do, and nothing can depress them.

I am proud to belong to this mighty race! We were not a race, but they made us one! They forged bonds between us, which we, in our timid and uncertain twilight, where every man is afraid of every other, could never have forged for ourselves. The orthodox and the stoolies automatically removed themselves from our midst when we were freed. We need no explicit agreement to support each other. We no longer need to test each other. We meet, look into each other's eyes, exchange a couple of words—and what need for further explanation? We are ready to help each other out. Our kind has friends everywhere. And there are millions of us!

Life behind bars has given us a new measure for men and for things. It has wiped from our eyes the gummy film of habit which always clogs the vision of the man who has escaped shocks. And we reach such unexpected conclusions!

N. Stolyarova, who came from Paris of her own free will in 1934, into the trap which bit off the whole middle part of her life, far from torturing herself and cursing the day she came, says: "I was right to defy those around me, to defy the voice of reason, and come to Russia! Without knowing a thing about Russia, I understood intuitively what it would be like."

At one time I. S. Karpunich-Braven, then a fiery, successful, and impatient brigade commander in the Civil War, did not bother to examine the lists put before him by the head of the

Special Section, but simply took a blunt pencil and jotted down at the bottom, not the top of the page, "h m"—small letters, not capitals, and without periods, as though it was a triviality. ("H.M." meant "highest measure of punishment"—for all of them!) After that he was promoted, and after that he spent twenty years and a half on the Kolyma—and next we find him living on a lonely piece of land in the middle of the forest, where he waters his garden, feeds his hens, makes things in his carpenter's shop, does not petition for rehabilitation, uses foul language about Voroshilov, fills exercise books with endless angry answers to every broadcast he hears and every newspaper article he reads. But a few more years pass—and the farmyard philosopher thoughtfully copies this aphorism out of a book:

"It is not enough to love mankind—you must be able to stand people." And just before he died he wrote, in words of his own but words so startling that you wonder whether they belong perhaps to some mystic, or perhaps to the aged Tolstoi:

"I have lived and judged all things by their effect on me. But now I am a different man, and I have stopped judging things in this way."

The remarkable V. P. Tarnovsky simply stayed on the Kolyma after serving his sentence. He writes verses, but sends them to nobody. Verses like these:

> My life is set in this far place
> And lived in silence, by God's will:
> For I have seen Cain face to face
> And could not bring myself to kill.[6]

The only cause for regret is that we shall all die off one by one, without achieving anything worthwhile.

■

Freedom has something else in store for former convicts—reunion with family and friends. Reunion of fathers with sons. Of husbands with wives. And it is not often that good comes out of these reunions. In the ten or fifteen years lived apart from us, how could our sons grow in harmony with us: sometimes they are simply

6. Truth demands that I add what happened later: he left the Kolyma and married unhappily. He lost his spiritual equilibrium, and does not know how to get his neck out of the noose.

strangers, sometimes they are enemies. Nor are women who wait faithfully for their husbands often rewarded: they have lived so long apart, long enough for a person to change completely, so that only his name is the same. His experience and hers are too different—and it is no longer possible for them to come together again.

This is a subject which others can make into films and novels, but there is no room for it in this book.

Let me tell just one story, that of Mariya Kadatskaya. (Plate No. 8 shows Kadatskaya and her husband when they were young; Plate No. 9, Kadatskaya as she is now.)

"In the first ten years my husband wrote me six hundred letters. In the next ten—just one, and that one made me wish I was dead. When he got leave for the first time, after nineteen years, he went to stay with relatives and only came to see me and my son for four days on his way through. The train by which we expected him was taken off that day. After a sleepless night I lay down to rest. I heard a ring. A strange voice said: 'I want to see Mariya Venediktovna.' I opened the door. In came a stout elderly man in a raincoat and a hat. He walked right in without saying a word. Still half asleep, I had forgotten for the moment that I was expecting my husband. We stood there. 'Don't you recognize me?' 'No.' I could only think that he was some relative of mine—I had a great number of them, whom I had not seen for many years. Then I looked at his compressed lips, remembered that I was expecting my husband, and fainted. My son arrived, and to make matters worse, he was unwell. So there we stayed, the three of us, for four days, never once leaving my one and only room. Father and son were very reserved with each other, and my husband and I hardly had a chance to talk; the conversation was general. He told us about his own life, and was not a bit interested to know how we had got on in his absence. As he went back to Siberia, he said goodbye without looking me in the eye. I told him that my husband had died in the Alps (he had been in Italy, where the allies had liberated him)."

There are, however, reunions of a different and more cheerful kind.

You may meet a warder or a camp commander. At the Teberdinsk tourist center you suddenly recognize physical training instructor Slava as a screw from Norilsk. Or Misha Bakst suddenly sees a familiar face in the Leningrad Gastronom, and the other man notices him, too. Captain Gusak, commander of a Camp

Division, is now out of uniform. "Wait a bit now, wait a bit. Didn't I see you inside somewhere? . . . Oh, yes, I remember, we took your parcels from you for bad work!" (He remembers! But all this seems natural to them, as though they have been put in charge of us forever, and the present stage is just a short interval.)

You may (as Belsky did) meet your unit commander, Colonel Rudyko, who hastily agreed to your arrest to spare himself unpleasantness. Also in civilian clothes and a neat fur cap, with an air of scholarly respectability.

You may also meet your interrogator—the one who used to strike you or put you in to feed the bugs. Nowadays he is drawing a good pension, like Khvat for instance, who interrogated and murdered the great Vavilov and now lives on Gorky Street. God save you from such a meeting—it is you again who will suffer a blow to the heart, not he.

Then again, you might meet the man who denounced you—the one who put you inside and is obviously flourishing. For some reason heaven does not rain thunderbolts on him. A prisoner who returns to his native place is bound to see those who informed on him. "Listen—why don't you bring a case against them?" some hotheaded friend will urge him. "At least it would mean public exposure!" (And at most, as everybody knows . . .) "No, I don't think so. . . . Let's leave things as they are," the rehabilitated prisoner will answer.

Because to bring such a case you would have to begin by harnessing those hundred oxen.

"Let life punish them!" says Avenir Borisov, with a shrug.

It's all he can say.

"That lady over there, L., a member of our union, once put me inside," said K. the composer to Shostakovich. "Make a written statement," Shostakovich angrily suggested, "and we'll expel her from the union!" (Don't bet on it, though!) K. waved the thought away. "No, thank you. I've been dragged around the floor by this beard, and I don't want any more."

But is it just a matter of retribution? G. Polev complains that "when I came out, the dirty swine who landed me in jail the first time very nearly got me put away again—and would have pulled it off if I hadn't abandoned my family and left my home town."

Now that's how it should be, that's *our Soviet way of doing things!*

Which is the dream, which is the ignis fatuus—the past? or the present? . . .

In 1955 Efroimson took Deputy Prosecutor General Salin a whole volume of criminal charges against Lysenko. "We are not competent to deal with that," Salin told him. "Address yourself to the Central Committee."

Since when were they not competent? Or why had they not admitted as much thirty years before?

The two false witnesses who put Chulpenyov in the Mongolian hole—Lozovsky and Seryogin—are both flourishing. Chulpenyev went to see Seryogin in the Consumer Services bureau of the Moscow Soviet, together with someone they had both known in his unit. "Let me introduce you. He was with us at Khalkhin-Gol—do you remember?" "No, I don't." "A fellow by the name of Chulpenyov—do you remember him?" "No. I don't. The war scattered us in all directions." "So you don't know what became of him?" "I haven't the slightest idea." "Oh, you lousy bastard, you!"

There's no more to be said. In the District Party Committee which has Seryogin on its books: "It can't be true! He's such a conscientious worker!"

Conscientious worker . . .

Nothing, and nobody, has budged. The thunder growled once or twice—and passed over with hardly a drop of rain.

No, things are just where they were—so much so that Y. A. Kreinovich, the expert on languages of the Far North,[7] went back to work in the same institute, the same sector, with the very people who turned him in and who still hated him: with these very same people he hangs up his overcoat and sits around the conference table daily.

It's rather as though the victims of Auschwitz and their former overseers set up a fancy-goods shop together.

There are Obergruppen stoolies in the literary world, too. How many lives has Y. Elsberg destroyed? Or Lesyuchevsky? Everybody knows about them—and nobody dares touch them. Efforts to have them expelled from the Writers' Union came to nothing. There was even less hope of getting them dismissed from their jobs. Or, needless to say, from the Party.

7. It has been aptly said of him that whereas some members of the People's Will Party achieved fame as philologists thanks to the freedom they enjoyed in exile, Kreinovich preserved his fame in spite of Stalin's camps: even on the Kolyma he did his best to study the Yukagir language.

When our Criminal Code was being drawn up (1926), it was calculated that murder by slander was five times less serious and blameworthy than murder by the knife. (And anyway it was unimaginable that under the dictatorship of the proletariat anyone would resort to such a bourgeois weapon as slander!) Under Article 95 a wittingly false denunciation or deposition aggravated by (*a*) accusation of a serious crime, (*b*) motives of personal gain, or (*c*) the manufacture of evidence is punishable by deprivation of freedom for *not more than . . . two years.* And it can be as little as six months.

The drafters of this article were either complete idiots, or only too farsighted.

My guess is that they were farsighted.

At every amnesty since then (the Stalin amnesty in 1945, the "Voroshilov amnesty" of 1953), they have remembered to include those sentenced under this little article, to look after their most dedicated helpers.

Then, of course, there are *statutory limitations.* If you are falsely accused (under Article 58), there are no time limits. If you are the false accuser—there is a time limit, and you'll be protected.

The case against Anna Chebotar-Tkach and her family was a patchwork of false depositions. In 1944 she, her father, and her two brothers were arrested for the alleged murder, allegedly for political reasons, of her sister-in-law. All three men were done to death in jail. (They wouldn't confess.) Anna did ten years. The sister-in-law turned out to be unharmed! But another ten years went by with Anna vainly pleading for rehabilitation! As late as 1964 the reply from the Prosecutor's Office was: "You were convicted by due process of law and there are no grounds for review." When in spite of this they did rehabilitate her, the indefatigable Skripnikova wrote a petition for Anna, asking that the perjurers be brought to trial. U.S.S.R. Public Prosecutor G. Terekhov[8] answered: "Impossible because of the *time limit.* . . ."

In the twenties they dug up, dragged in, and shot the ignorant peasants who *forty* years earlier had carried out the Tsarist court's sentence of execution on the Narodovoltsy.* But those muzhiks were "not ours." Whereas these informers are flesh of our flesh.

8. The same Terekhov who would conduct the case against Galanskov and Ginzburg.

Such is the *freedom* into which former zeks are released. Look where you will, is there any historical parallel? When did so much generally recognized villainy escape judgment and punishment?

Why should we expect anything good to come of it? What can grow out of this stinking corruption?

How magnificently the wicked scheme of the Archipelago has succeeded!

END OF PART VI

PART VII

Stalin Is No More

■

"Neither repented they of their murders . . ."

REVELATION 9:21

NOTE: Passages in Part VII which were set in smaller type in the Russian edition have been omitted from the English translation at the author's request as being of limited interest to the non-Russian reader.

Chapter 1

■

Looking Back on It All

We never, of course, lost hope that our story *would* be told: since sooner or later the truth is told about all that has happened in history. But in our imagining this would come in the rather distant future—after most of us were dead. And in a completely changed situation. I thought of myself as the chronicler of the Archipelago, I wrote and wrote, but I, too, had little hope of seeing it in print in my lifetime.

History is forever springing surprises even on the most perspicacious of us. We could not foresee what it would be like: how for no visible compelling reason the earth would shudder and give, how the gates of the abyss would briefly, grudgingly part so that two or three birds of truth would fly out before they slammed to, to stay shut for a long time to come.

So many of my predecessors had not been able to finish writing, or to preserve what they had written, or to crawl or scramble to safety—but I had this good fortune: to thrust the first handful of truth through the open jaws of the iron gates before they slammed shut again.

Like matter enveloped by antimatter, it exploded instantaneously!

Its explosion touched off in turn an explosion of letters—that was to be expected. But also an explosion of newspaper articles—written with gritted teeth, with ill-concealed hatred and resentment: an explosion of official praise that left a sour taste in my mouth.

When former zeks heard this fanfare from all the newspapers in unison, learned that some sort of story about the camps had

come out and that the journalists were slavering over it, their unanimous conclusion was: "More lying nonsense! Nothing's safe from those crafty liars!" That our newspapers, with their habitual immoderation, might suddenly start falling over each other to praise the truth was something no one could possibly imagine! Some of them were reluctant to risk soiling their hands on my story.

But when they started reading it, a single groan broke from all those thousands—a groan of joy and of pain. Letters poured in.

I treasure those letters. Only too rarely do our fellow countrymen have a chance to speak their mind on matters of public concern—and former prisoners still more rarely. Their faith had proved false, their hopes had been cheated so often—yet now they believed that the era of truth was really beginning, that at last it was possible to speak and write boldly!

And they were disappointed, of course, for the hundredth time. . . .

"Truth has prevailed, but too late!" they wrote.

Even later than they thought, because it had still by no means prevailed.

There were also some sober people who did not put their names at the end of their letters ("I must think of my health for the little time left to me"), or who asked point-blank, while the journalistic adulation was at white heat: "Why, I wonder, did Volkovoy* allow you to publish this story? Please answer; I'm worried in case you're in the punishment cells." Or: "Why haven't you and Tvardovsky both been put away?"

Because their trap has jammed and failed to work, that's why. What, then, must the Volkovoys do? Take up their pens like the rest! Write letters themselves. Or refutations in the press. And indeed they proved to be remarkably literate.

From this second stream of letters we learn their names, and how they describe themselves. We had been looking for the right term for so long—"camp bosses," "camp personnel"—no, no: "practical workers," that was it! Golden words, these! "Chekists" was somehow not quite right; practical workers—that's the term they prefer.

And they write:

"Ivan Denisovich is a toady." (V. V. Oleinik, Aktyubinsk)

"One feels for Shukhov neither compassion nor respect." (Y. Matveyev, Moscow)

"Shukhov was rightly convicted. . . . What should a zek be

doing outside anyway?" (V. I. Silin, Sverdlovsk)

"These submen with their shabby little souls were *dealt with too leniently by the courts.* I feel no pity for people whose behavior during the Fatherland War was dubious." (E. A. Ignatovich, Kimovsk)

Shukhov is "a highly skilled, resourceful, ruthless scavenger. The consummate egoist, living only for his belly." (V. D. Uspensky, Moscow)[1]

"Instead of portraying the destruction of the most loyal citizens in 1937, the author has chosen 1941, when it was mainly self-seekers who landed in jail.[2] In '37 there were no Shukhovs[3] and people went to their deaths in grim silence, wondering *why anyone needed all this?*"[4] (P. A. Pankov, Kramatorsk)

On conditions in the camps:

"Why give a lot of food to those who do not work? Their energy remains unexpended. . . . I say the criminal world is being treated far too gently." (S. I. Golovin, Akmolinsk)

"Where rations are concerned we shouldn't forget one thing—that *they are not at a holiday resort.* They must atone for their guilt with honest toil." (Sergeant Major Bazunov of Oimyakon, age 55, grown gray in the camp service)

"There are fewer abuses of authority in the camps than in any other Soviet institution [!!]. I can affirm that things *are now stricter* in the camps." (V. Karakhanov, Moscow area)

"This story is an insult to the soldiers, sergeants, and officers of the MOOP.* The people are the makers of history, but how are the people portrayed here . . . ? As 'screws,' 'blockheads,' 'idiots.' " (Bazunov)

"We, the executors, were also human, we were also capable of heroism: we did not shoot every fallen prisoner, and by not doing so risked our posts." (Grigory Trofimovich Zheleznyak)[5]

"In the story the whole day is filled brimful with the negative behavior of prisoners, and the role of the administration is not shown. . . . But the detention of prisoners in camps *was not the*

1. Can this pensioner be the Uspensky who murdered his father, the priest, and made a career in the camps on the strength of it?

2. What he means is simple people, non-Party members, prisoners of war.

3. You'd be surprised! . . . There were more of them than *of your sort!*

4. What deep thinkers they were! Incidentally, they weren't as quiet as all that: they died with endless professions of regret and pleas for mercy.

5. Zheleznyak claims to remember me, too: "He arrived in irons, and he was a notorious troublemaker. Later he was sent to Dzhezkazgan and it was he, together with Kuznetsov, who headed the rising."

cause of all that happened in the period of the personality cult, but is simply connected with execution of the sentence." (A. I. Grigoryev)

"The guards did not know why any particular prisoner was inside."[6] (Karakhanov)

"Solzhenitsyn describes the whole *work* of the camp as though there was no Party leadership there at all. But Party organizations existed then, *just as they do now,* and *guided all our work according to their conscience.*"

Practical workers "only carried out what standing orders, periodic instructions, and operative decisions from above demanded of them. *The same people who were working there then work there still* [!!][7] (perhaps some 10 percent of the personnel are new), they have been repeatedly commended for their work, enjoy a good professional reputation. . . .

"All on the staff of MOOP are fired with outraged indignation. . . . The spiteful bitterness of this work is simply astounding. . . . He is deliberately trying to turn the people against the MVD! . . . Why do our Organs allow people to lampoon MOOP personnel? . . . *This is dishonorable!*" (Anna Filippovna Zakharova, Irkutsk Province. In the MVD since 1950, Party member since 1956!)

Just listen to it! Listen to it! *"This is dishonorable!"* A cry from the heart! For forty-five years they tortured the natives—and that was honorable. But someone publishes a story about it—and that's dishonorable!

"I've never before had to swallow such trash. . . . And this is not just my opinion. Many of us feel the same, our name is *Legion.*"[8]

In short: "Solzhenitsyn's story should be withdrawn immediately from all libraries and reading rooms." (A. Kuzmin, Orel)

Withdrawn it was, but by easy stages.

"This book should not have been published, the material should have been handed over to the Organs of the KGB instead." (Anon.,[9] a coeval of October)

October's contemporary shows insight: it very nearly happened that way.

6. What, us? "We were only carrying out orders"; "We didn't know."

7. A very important piece of information!

8. Quite right—their name is Legion. Only they were in too much of a hurry to check their reference to the Gospel. It was of course a Legion of *devils.*

9. Another one who conceals his identity, just in case: who the hell knows which way the wind will blow next!

And here's another "Anon.," a poet this time:

> Hear me, O Russia,
> Our souls are unspotted—
> Our conscience unblemished! . . .

That "accursed incognito"* again! It would be nice to know whether he had shot people himself, or merely sent them to their deaths, or whether he's just an ordinary orthodox citizen—but alas, he's anonymous! Anon., spotless Anon. . . .

Finally, we have the broad philosophical view:

"History has never had need of the past [!!], and the history of socialist culture needs it least of all." (A. Kuzmin)

History has no need of the past! That's the conclusion our loyalists are left with! What, then, does it need? The future, perhaps? And *these* are the people who write our history! . . .

What retort can we make to them all, faced with their massive ignorance? How can we now make them understand? . . .

Truth, it seems, is always bashful, easily reduced to silence by the too blatant encroachment of falsehood.

The prolonged absence of any free exchange of information within a country opens up a gulf of incomprehension between whole groups of the population, between millions and millions.

We simply *cease to be a single people,* for we speak, indeed, different languages.

■

Nonetheless, a breakthrough had been made! Oh, it was stout, the wall of lies, it looked so secure, looked built to last forever—but a breach yawned, and news broke through. Only yesterday we had had no camps, no Archipelago, and today there they were for the whole people, the whole world to see—prison camps! Camps, what is more, of the Fascist type!

What was to be done? You, whose skill in turning things inside out is of many years' standing! You venerable panegyrists! Surely you won't put up with it? You . . . surely you won't quail? Men like you . . . give way to this?

Of course they wouldn't! The distortion experts rushed unbidden into the breach! They might have been waiting all those years for just this: to cover the breach with their gray-winged bodies and with the joyous—yes, joyous!—flapping of their wings to hide the

Archipelago in its nakedness from astonished spectators.

Their first cry, which came to them instinctively, in a flash, was: *It will never happen again!* All praise to the Party! It will never happen again!

Such clever fellows, such expert gap-stoppers! Obviously, if it will never happen again, this automatically implies that it is not happening *today.* There will be nothing of the sort in the future —so of course it cannot exist today!

So cleverly did they flap their wings before the breach that the Archipelago became a mirage almost as soon as it rose into view: it does not exist, it will not exist, if you really must, you can just about say that it did exist once upon a time. . . . But of course—that was in the days of the *personality cult.* (Very convenient, this "personality cult": trot it out boldly and pretend you've explained something.) What manifestly does exist, what is left to us, what fills the breach, what will endure forever, is—"All praise to the Party!" (Praise is apparently due in the first place because "it can't happen again," but very shortly it begins to sound like praise for the Archipelago—the two things merge and cannot be separated: on every side we heard it, even before they got hold of the magazine with my story in it: "All praise to the Party!" Even before they reached the passage about how Volkovoy used to lay on with the lash, cries of "All praise to the Party" thundered all around!)

In this way the cherubim of the lie, the guardians of the Wall, dealt with the first moment of danger—admirably.

■

When Khrushchev, wiping the tear from his eye, gave permission for the publication of *Ivan Denisovich,* he was quite sure that it was about Stalin's camps, and that he had none of his own.

Tvardovsky, too, when he was worrying the highest in the land to give their imprimatur, sincerely believed that it was all in the past, that it was over and done with. . . .

Tvardovsky can be forgiven. Around him, everybody in public life in Moscow was sustained by this one thought: "There's a thaw, they've stopped *snatching* people, we've had two cathartic congresses, people are returning from nowhere, and in large numbers!" The Archipelago was lost in a beautiful pink mist of rehabilitations, and became altogether invisible.

But I (even II) succumbed, and I do not deserve forgiveness. I

did not mean to deceive Tvardovsky! I, too, genuinely believed that the story I had brought him was about the past! Could *my* tongue have forgotten the taste of gruel? I had sworn never to forget. Had I somehow never learned the mentality of dog handlers? Could I have failed, as I schooled myself to be the chronicler of the Archipelago, to understand how closely akin it is to the state, and how necessary to it? I was so sure that I at least was not in the power of the law I have mentioned:

"As the paunch grows, the memory goes."

I did get fatter. I fell for it and . . . believed. I let myself be persuaded by the complacent mainland. Believed what my own new-found prosperity would have me believe. And the stories told by the last of my friends to come from *you know where.* Conditions were easier! Discipline had relaxed! They were letting people out all the time! Closing whole camp areas! Dismissing NKVD men!

No—we are creatures of mortal clay! Subject to its laws. No measure of grief, however great, can leave us forever sensitive to the general suffering. And until we transcend our clay there will be no just social system on this earth—whether democratic or authoritarian.

So that I was taken by surprise when I received yet a third stream of letters—from *present-day* zeks, although this was the most natural of all, and the first thing I should have expected.

On crumpled scraps of paper, in a blurred pencil scrawl, in stray envelopes often addressed and posted by free employees, in other words, *on the sly,* today's Archipelago sent me its criticisms, and sometimes its angry protests.

These letters, too, were a single many-throated cry. But a cry that said: *"What about us!!??"*

In the uproar over my story the press had nimbly avoided all that free citizens and foreigners did not need to know and the theme of its trumpetings was: "Yes, it happened, but it will never happen again."

And the zeks set up a howl: What do you mean, never happen again? We're *here inside now,* and our conditions are just the same!

"Nothing has changed since Ivan Denisovich's time"—the message was the same in letters from many different places.

"Any zek who reads your book will feel bitterness and disgust because everything is just as it was."

"What has changed, if all the laws providing for twenty-five years' imprisonment issued under Stalin are still in force?"

"Once more we're being put inside for nothing at all. Whose *personality cult* is to blame this time?"

"A black mist has covered us, and no one can see us."

"Why have people like Volkovoy gone unpunished? . . . They are still in charge of our re-education."

"From the shabbiest warder to the head of the camps administration, the existence of the camps is of vital concern to them all. The warders fabricate charges against us on the most trivial excuses; the security officers blacken our personal files. . . . Prisoners like me with twenty-five years are their favorite fare, and they gorge themselves on it, these corrupt creatures whose mission it is to exhort us to virtue. They are just like the colonizers who used to pretend that Indians and Negroes were inferior human beings. It takes no effort at all to set public opinion against us; all you need do is write an article called 'The Man Behind Bars'[10] . . . and next day the people will be holding mass meetings to get us burned in ovens."

True. Every word of it true.

"You have taken up your position with the rear guard!" says Vanya Alekseyev, to my dismay.

After reading all these letters, I who had been thinking myself a hero saw that I hadn't a leg to stand on: in ten years I had lost my vital link with the Archipelago.

For *them,* for *today*'s zeks my book is no book, my truth is no truth unless there is a continuation, unless I go on to speak of them, too. Truth must be told—and things must change! If words are not about real things and do not cause things to happen, what is the good of them? Are they anything more than the barking of village dogs at night?

(I should like to commend this thought to our modernists: this

10. Kasyukov and Monchanskaya, "The Man Behind Bars," *Sovetskaya Rossiya,* August 27, 1960. An article inspired by government circles, which put an end to the brief period (1955–1960) of mildness on the Archipelago. In the view of the authors, the conditions created in the camps had turned them into "charitable institutions"; "punishment is forgotten"; "the prisoners do not want to know about their obligations," while "the administration has many fewer rights than the prisoners." (?) They assure us that the camps are "free boardinghouses" (for some reason no charge is made for laundry, haircuts, and the use of visiting rooms). They are outraged to find that there is only a forty-hour working week in the camps, and indeed that—so they say—"prisoners are not obliged to work." (??) They call for "hard and strict conditions," so that criminals will be *afraid* of jail (hard labor, bare planks without mattresses to sleep on, civilian clothes to be prohibited, "no more stalls selling sweets," etc.); they also call for the abolition of early discharge ("and if a man is guilty of an offense against discipline, *let him stay in longer!*"). And they further recommend that "when he has served his time, the prisoner should not count on charity."

is how our people usually think of literature. They will not soon lose the habit. Should they, do you think?)

And so I came to my senses. And through the pink perfumed clouds of rehabilitation I could make out the familiar rocky piles of the Archipelago, its gray outlines broken by watchtowers.

The state of our society can be well described in terms of an electromagnetic field. All the lines of force in it point away from freedom and toward tyranny. These lines are very stable, they have etched their way in and set hard in the grooves; it is almost impossible to perturb them, deflect them, twist them about. Any charge, any mass introduced into the field is blown effortlessly in the direction of tyranny, and can never break through toward freedom. For that ten thousand oxen must be yoked.

Now that my book has been openly declared harmful, its publication recognized as a mistake (one of the "consequences of voluntarism in literature"), now that it is being removed even from libraries used by the free population—the mere mention of Ivan Denisovich's name, or my own, has become an irreparably seditious act on the Archipelago. But even in those days! even then —when Khrushchev shook my hand and to the accompaniment of applause presented me to the three hundred who considered themselves the artistic elite; when I was getting a "big press" in Moscow, and reporters waited in suspense outside my hotel room; when it was explicitly announced that *such books had the support of* the Party and the government; when the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court was proud of having rehabilitated me (just as it now no doubt regrets it) and the lawyer colonels declared from its bench that the book *should be read* in the camps!—even then the mute, the secret, the unnamed forces were invisibly resisting . . . and the book was stopped! *Even-then* it was stopped! Only rarely did it reach a camp legally, so that readers could take it out of the Culture and Education Section library. It was removed from camp libraries. If it was sent from outside by book post, it was confiscated. Free employees sneaked it in under their coats, and charged zeks five rubles a time, or even, so we are told, as much as twenty (Khrushchev rubles! from zeks! but no one who knows the unscrupulous world about the camps will be surprised). The zeks carried it in like a knife past the search point; hid it in the daytime and read it at night. In a camp somewhere in the Northern Urals they made a metal binding for it so that it would last longer.

But why talk about zeks when the same tacit but generally accepted prohibition was extended to the world about the camps, too. At Vis station on the Northern Railway, Mariya Aseyeva, *a free woman,* wrote to the *Literary Gazette* expressing her approval of the story—and whether she posted the letter or imprudently left it on the table, five hours after she had put her opinion on paper the secretary of the local Party organization, V. G. Shishkin, was accusing her of political provocation (the words they think up!)—and she was arrested on the spot.[11]

In Corrective Labor Colony No. 2, at Tiraspol, the sculptor G. Nedov, himself a prisoner, modeled the figure of a prisoner (Plate No. 10) in his trusty's workshop, in Plasticine to begin with. The disciplinary officer, Captain Solodyankin, discovered it: "So you're making a prisoner, are you? Who gave you the right? This is *counter-revolution!*" He seized the figure by its legs, tore it apart, and hurled the halves on the floor. "Been reading too many of those Ivan Denisoviches!" (But he didn't go on to stamp on it, and Nedov hid the halves.) On Solodyankin's complaint, Nedov was called in to see the camp chief, Bakayev, but in the meantime he had managed to come upon a few newspapers in the Culture and Education Section. "We'll put you on trial!" thundered Bakayev. "You're trying to turn people against the Soviet regime!" (So they understand what the sight of a zek can do!) "Permit me to tell you, Citizen Chief... Nikita Sergeyevich says here... And here's what Comrade Ilyichev says . . ." "He talks to us like equals," gasped Bakayev. Only six months later did Nedov dare retrieve the halves; he glued them together, made a Babbit metal cast and sent the figure out of the camp with the help of a free man.

Repeated searches for the story began in Corrective Labor Colony No. 2. A thorough inspection was made of the living area. They did not find it. One day Nedov decided to get his own back: he settled down after work with Tevekelyan's *Granite Does Not Melt,* behaving as though he was hiding something from the rest of the room (with stoolies in earshot, he asked the lads to screen him), but making sure that he could be seen through the window. The stoolies did their work quickly. Three warders ran in (while a fourth stayed outside and watched through the window, in case Nedov passed the book to someone). They seized it! They carried it off to the warders' room and put it away in the safe.

11. How this incident ended I just don't know.

Warder Chizhik, with his huge bunch of keys, arms akimbo: "We've found the book! You'll be put in the hole now!" But next morning an officer took a look. "Oh, you idiots! . . . Give it back to him."

This was how the zeks read a book "approved by the Party and the people"!

■

In a declaration by the Soviet government dated December, 1964, we read: "The perpetrators of monstrous crimes must never and in no circumstances escape just retribution. . . . The crimes of the Fascist murderers, who aimed at the destruction of whole peoples, have no precedent in history."

This was to prevent the Federal German Republic from introducing a statute of limitations for war criminals after twenty years had elapsed.

But they show no desire to face judgment *themselves,* although they, too, "aimed at the destruction of whole peoples."

A lot of articles appear in our press on the importance of punishing fugitive West German criminals. There are even people who specialize in such articles—Lev Ginzburg, for instance. He writes as follows (some say he intends us to see an analogy): What moral training did the Nazis have to undergo for mass murder to seem natural and right to them? Now the lawgivers try to defend themselves by saying that they were not the ones to carry out the sentences! And those who did carry them out, by saying that it was not they who enacted the laws!

It's all so familiar. We have just read what our *practical workers* have to say: "The custody of prisoners is a matter of carrying out the sentence of the courts. The guard did not know who was inside for what."

So you should have *made it your business to know,* if you are human beings! That is what makes you villains—that you looked upon the people in your custody neither as fellow citizens nor as fellow men. Did not the Nazis have their *instructions,* too? Did not the Nazis believe that they were saving the Aryan race?

Nor will our interrogators stumble over their answer (they have it pat already): Why, they ask, did prisoners make statements against themselves? In other words, "They should have

stood fast when we tortured them!" And why did informers pass on false reports? We relied on these as though they were sworn evidence!

For a short time they became uneasy. V. N. Ilyin, the former lieutenant general of the MGB of whom we spoke earlier, said of Stolbunovsky (General Gorbatov's interrogator, and mentioned by him): "Oh, dear, dear, what an awful business it is! All these troubles he's having. And the poor fellow draws such a good pension." This is also why A. F. Zakharova took up her pen—she was worried that they might all come under attack soon. Of Captain Likhosherstov (!),* whom Dyakov had "denigrated," she wrote emotionally: "He is still a captain, is secretary of a Party organization [!], and devotes his *labor* to agriculture. You can imagine how difficult it is for him to *work* now, with people writing such things about him! There is talk of *looking into* Likhosherstov, and perhaps even taking him to court.[12] *What for?* If it stops at talk, well and good, but it is not impossible that they will get around to it. That really will cause uproar among the MOOP personnel. Look into him, for *carrying out fully the instructions he was given from above?* Is he now supposed to answer for those who gave the instructions? How very clever! When there's an accident —blame the switchman!"

But the commotion was soon over. No, no one would have to *answer.* No one would be *looked into.*

Staffs, perhaps, were somewhat reduced in places—but have a little patience and they will expand again! Meanwhile, the security boys, those who have not yet reached pensionable age, and those who need to top up their pensions, have become writers, journalists, editors, antireligious lecturers, ideological workers, or, some of them, industrial managers. They will just change their gloves and go on leading us as before. It's safer that way. (And if someone is content to live on his pension—let him enjoy his ease. Take Lieutenant Colonel [ret.] Khurdenko, for example. Lieutenant colonel—that's quite a rank! A former battalion commander, no doubt? No, he began in 1938 as a simple screw; he used to hold the force-feeding pipe.)

While in the records office they carry out a leisurely inspection and destroy all unwanted documents: lists of people shot, orders committing prisoners to solitary confinement or the Dis-

12. "Putting him on trial" is unthinkable, and she cannot bring herself to use the words.

ciplinary Barracks, files on investigations in the camps, denunciations from stoolies, superfluous information about practical workers and convoy guards. In Medical Sections, accounts offices—everywhere, in fact, there are superfluous papers, unnecessary clues to be found. . . .

> We take our seats at your feast like silent ghosts.
> And you who hated us living shall be our hosts.
> Living we could not move you, but speechless and dead
> We are the vengeful presence you cannot but dread.
> Victoria G.—a woman graduate of the Kolyma camps

A word in passing. Why, indeed, is it always the switchmen? What about the traffic managers? What about those a little higher up than the screws—the practical workers, the interrogators? Those who only pointed a finger? Those who only spoke a few words from a platform? . . .

How does it go again? "The perpetrators of monstrous crimes . . . in no circumstances . . . righteous retribution . . . have no precedent in history . . . aimed at the destruction of whole peoples . . ."

Shh! Shh! Now we see why in August, 1965, from the platform of the Ideological Conference (a closed conference on the Direction Our Minds Should Take), the following proclamation was made: *"It is time to rehabilitate* the sound and useful concept of *enemy of the people!"*

Chapter 2

■

Rulers Change, the Archipelago Remains

The Special Camps must have been among the best-loved brain-children of Stalin's old age. After so many experiments in punishment and re-education, this ripe perfection was finally born: a compact, faceless organization of numbers, not people, psychologically divorced from the Motherland that bore it, having an entrance but no exit, devouring only enemies and producing only industrial goods and corpses. It is difficult to imagine the paternal pain which the Visionary Architect would have felt if he had witnessed in turn the bankruptcy of this great system of his. While he yet lived it was shaken, it was giving off sparks, it was covered with cracks—but probably caution prevailed and these things were not reported to him. When the Special Camp system began it was inert, sluggish, unalarming—but it underwent a rapid process of overheating, and within a few years its state was that of a boiling volcano. If the Great Coryphaeus had lived a year or eighteen months longer, it would have been impossible to conceal these explosions from him, and his weary senile brain would have been burdened with a new decision: either to abandon his pet scheme and mix the camps again, or, on the contrary, to crown it by systematically shooting all the index-lettered thousands.

But, amid weeping and wailing, the Thinker died somewhat too soon for this.[1] He died, and soon afterward his frozen hand brought crashing down his still rosy-cheeked, still hale and vigor-

1.

ous comrade in arms—the Minister of those extraordinarily extensive, intricate, and irresolvable Internal Affairs.

The fall of the Archipelago's Boss tragically accelerated the breakdown of the Special Camps. (What an irreparable historic mistake it was! What sense does it make to disembowel the Minister of Arcane Affairs!, lay oily paws on sky-blue shoulder boards?!)

Number patches—the supreme discovery of twentieth-century prison-camp science—were hurriedly ripped off, thrown away, and forgotten! This alone was enough to rob the Special Camps of their austere uniformity. It hardly mattered, when the bars had also been removed from hut windows and locks from hut doors, so that the Special Camps had lost the pleasant jail-like peculiarities which distinguished them from Corrective Labor Camps. (Perhaps they needn't have hurried with the bars—but they couldn't afford to be late either; in times like those it's best to show where you stand!) Sad though it was, the stone jailhouse at Ekibastuz, which had held out against the rebels, was now pulled down, razed quite officially. . . .[2] But what could you expect, if they could suddenly release to a man the Austrian, Hungarian, Polish, and Rumanian prisoners in Special Camps, showing scant concern for their black crimes and their fifteen- or twenty-year terms of imprisonment, and so undermine altogether the prisoner's awe of heavy sentences. They also lifted restrictions on correspondence, which more than anything had made prisoners in Special Camps really feel buried alive. They even allowed visits—dreadful thought! Visits! . . . (Even in mutinous Kengir they began building separate little houses for this purpose.) The tide of liberalism swept on so irresistibly over the erstwhile Special Camps that prisoners were allowed to choose their own hair styles (and aluminum dishes started vanishing from the kitchens for conversion into aluminum combs). Instead of credit accounts, instead of Special Camp coupons, the natives were allowed to handle ordinary Soviet currency and settle their bills with cash like people outside.

Carelessly, recklessly they demolished the system which had fed them—the system which they had spent decades weaving and binding and lashing together.

And were those hardened criminals at all mollified by this pampering? They were not! On the contrary! They showed their depravity and ingratitude by adopting the profoundly inappropri-

2. And we were denied the possibility of opening a museum there in the eighties.

ate, offensive, and nonsensical word "Beria-ites"—and now whenever something upset them they would yell this insult at conscientious convoy guards, long-suffering warders, and their solicitous guardians, the camp chiefs. Not only did the word pain the tenderhearted practical workers, it could even be dangerous so soon after Beria's fall, because someone might make it the starting point of an accusation.

For this reason the head of one of the Kengir Camp Divisions (by then purged of mutineers and replenished with prisoners from Ekibastuz) was compelled to deliver the following address from the platform: "Men!" (In those few short years, from 1954 to 1956, they found it possible to call the prisoners "men.") "You hurt the feelings of the supervisory staff and the convoy troops by shouting 'Beria-ites' at them! Please stop it." To which the diminutive V. G. Vlasov replied: "Your feelings have been hurt in the last few months. But I've heard nothing but 'Fascist' from your guards for eighteen years. Do you think we have no feelings?" And so the major promised to cut out the abusive word "Fascist." A fair trade.

After all these pernicious and destructive reforms we may consider the separate history of the Special Camps concluded in 1954, and need no longer distinguish them from Corrective Labor Camps.

Throughout the topsy-turvy Archipelago easier times set in from 1954 and lasted till 1956—an era of unprecedented indulgences, perhaps the period of greatest freedom in its history, if we disregard the BDZ's (detention centers for nonprofessional criminals) in the mid-twenties.

Instruction capped instruction, inspector vied with inspector, encouraging ever wilder displays of liberalism in the camps. Permission for the use of female labor in the forests was withdrawn —yes, it was acknowledged that lumbering was perhaps excessively heavy work for women (although thirty years of continual use were the proof that it was not too heavy at all). Parole was reintroduced for those who had served two-thirds of their sentence. They began paying money wages in all camps, and prisoners flooded the shops, which were subject to no prudent disciplinary restrictions—and how could they be when so many prisoners were unguarded so much of the time? Indeed, they could spend their money in the settlement, too, if they wished. All huts were wired for radio, prisoners had more than their fill of newspapers and wall

newspapers, agitators were assigned to each work team. Comrade lecturers (colonels, even!) came to address the camps' population on various themes—even on the perversion of history by Aleksei Tolstoi—but the administration did not find it so easy to collect an audience (they could no longer drive them in with sticks, and subtler methods of pressure and persuasion were necessary). There was a continual buzz of private conversation in the hall, and nobody listened to the lecturers. Prisoners were permitted to subscribe to the loan, but no one except the loyalists was moved by this, and their mentors had to tug each prisoner by the hand toward the subscription list and squeeze the odd ten (one ruble, Khrushchev style) out of him. They started organizing joint shows for men's and women's camps on Sundays—people flocked to these willingly, and men even bought themselves ties in the camp shops.

Much of the Archipelago's gold reserve was put into circulation again. There was a revival of the selfless voluntary activities by which it had lived in the days of the Great Canals. "Councils of Activists" were set up, with sectors like those of a local trade union committee (for Industrial Training, Culture and Recreation, and Services), with the struggle for higher productivity and better discipline as their main task. "Comrades' courts" were recreated, with the right to censure offenders, to request disciplinary measures or the nonapplication of the "two-thirds" rule.

These measures had once served our Leaders well—but that was in camps which had not gone through the Special Camp course in murder and mutiny. Now things were simpler: one chairman of an Activists' Council was murdered (at Kengir), a second beaten up—and suddenly nobody wanted to join. (Captain Second Class Burkovsky worked at this time in a Council of Activists, worked honestly and conscientiously, but because he was always being threatened with the knife he was also very cautious, and attended meetings of the Banderist brigade to listen to criticism of his actions.)

And still the pitiless blows of liberalism staggered and rocked the camp system. "Light Discipline Camp Divisions" were set up (there was even one in Kengir!): in effect, you need only sleep in the camp area, because you went to work without escort, by any route and at any time you pleased (everybody, in fact, tried to set out early and return late). On Sunday a third of the prisoners were let out on the town before dinner, a third of them after dinner, and

only one-third were not allowed an outing.[3]

Let the reader put himself in the position of the camp authorities and tell me: Could they operate in such conditions? Could anyone expect good results?

One MVD officer, my traveling companion on a Siberian train journey in 1962, described this whole era in the life of the camps until 1954 as follows: "Things were completely out of hand! Those who didn't want to didn't even go to work. They bought television sets with their own money."[4] He had retained very dark memories of that short but unpleasant period.

For no good can come of it when his mentor stands before a prisoner like a suppliant, with neither whips nor punishment cells nor graded short rations to fall back on!

But this was apparently still not enough: the next assault on the Archipelago was with a battering ram called the *off-camp* (living-out) system. Prisoners were allowed to move out of camp altogether, to acquire houses and families; they were paid wages like free men, and paid in full (with no more deductions for the upkeep of the camp, the guards, and the administration). Their only remaining link with the camp was that once a fortnight they went in to report.

This was the end—the end of the world, or of the Archipelago, or of both at once!—but the organs of the law applauded the off-camp system as an outstandingly humane, a pioneering discovery of the Communist order![5]

After these blows there seemed to be nothing left but to disband the camps and be done with it. To destroy the great Archipelago; ruin, scatter, and demoralize hundreds of thousands of practical workers with their wives, children, and domestic animals; make faithful service, rank, and an impeccable record things of no account.

It seemed to have begun already: something called "Commis-

3. This does not mean that such leniency was universal. Punitive Camp Divisions were also preserved, like the "All-Union Punitive Camp" at Andzyoba, near Bratsk, with our old friend from Ozerlag, the bloodstained Captain Mishin in charge. In the summer of 1955 there were about four hundred prisoners there for special punishment (Tenno among them). But even there the prisoners, not the warders, were masters of the camp.

4. If they didn't work, where did the money come from? If this was in the North, and in 1955 at that, where did the television sets come from? Still, I never dreamed of interrupting him. I enjoyed listening.

5. Described, we may add (together with "remission for good conduct" and "conditional early release"), by Chekhov in *Sakhalin:* convicts classified as "expected to reform" had the right to build themselves houses and to marry.

sions of the Supreme Soviet," or more simply "unloading parties," began arriving at the camps, cold-shouldering the camp authorities, taking over the staff hut for their sessions, and writing out orders of release as light-heartedly and irresponsibly as though they were warrants for arrest.

A deadly threat hung over the whole caste of practical workers. They had to think of something! They had to *fight!*

■

One of two fates awaits any important social event in the U.S.S.R.: either it will be hushed up or it will be the subject of calumny. I can think of no significant event in our country which has slipped past the roadblock.

So it was throughout the existence of the Archipelago: most of the time it was hushed up, and whatever was written about it was lies: whether in the days of the Great Canals, or about the unloading commissions of 1956.

As far as these commissions were concerned, we ourselves, with no insidious prompting from the newspapers, under no pressure from outside, assisted the work of sentimental falsification. Who would not be deeply moved: we were used to attack from our own lawyers, and now we saw public prosecutors taking our side! We pined for *freedom,* we felt that out there a new life was beginning, we could see as much even from the changes in the camps—and suddenly there came a miracle-working plenipotentiary commission which talked to each prisoner for five or ten minutes, then handed him a rail ticket and a passport (some of them even registered for Moscow). What, except praise, could burst from the emaciated, chronically bronchitic, wheezy breasts of us prisoners?

But what if we had risen for a moment above the happiness that set our hearts painfully pounding, and ourselves running to stuff our rags into our duffel bags—and asked ourselves whether *this* was the proper ending to all Stalin's crimes? Should not the commission have stood before a general line-up of prisoners, bared their heads, and said:

"Brothers! We have been sent by the Supreme Soviet to beg your forgiveness. For years and decades you have languished here, though you are guilty of nothing, while we gathered in ceremonial halls under cut-glass chandeliers with never a thought for you. We submissively confirmed the cannibal's inhuman decrees, every one

of them, we are accomplices in his murders. Accept our belated repentance, if you can. The gates are open, and you are free. Out there on the airstrip, planes are landing with medicines, food, and warm clothing. There are doctors on board."

Either way, they obtained their freedom—but this was the wrong way to confer it, a denial of its true meaning. The unloading commission was like a careful janitor following the trail of Stalin's vomit, and diligently mopping it up—that was all. This was no way to lay new moral foundations for our society.

I am quoting in what follows the judgment of A. Skripnikova, with which I entirely agree. Prisoners are summoned one by one (as usual, to keep them disunited) into the office where the commission sits. A few factual questions are asked about each man's case. The questions are perfectly polite, and apparently well meant, but their drift is that *the prisoner must admit his guilt* (not the Supreme Soviet, but the unhappy prisoner again!). He must be silent, he must bow his head, he must be put in the position of one forgiven, not one who forgives! In other words, they want to coax out of him with the promise of freedom what previously they could not wring from him even by torture. Why? you may ask. It is most important: he must return to freedom a timid soul! And at the same time the commission's records will make it appear to History that those inside were, most of them, guilty, that the pictures of brutal lawlessness have been greatly overdrawn. (There may have been a handsome financial benefit, too: without rehabilitation, no compensation need be paid.)[6] If it meant no more than this, the release of prisoners held no dangers: it would not blow the whole camp system sky-high, it created no obstacle to *new admissions* (which went on uninterruptedly even in 1956–1957) and no obligation to release the newcomers in their turn.

What of those who out of incomprehensible pride refused to acknowledge their guilt to the commission? *They were left inside.* There were quite a few of them. (Unrepentant women prisoners in Dubrovlag in 1956 were rounded up and dispatched to the Kemerovo camps.)

Skripnikova tells us of the following incident. One Western

6. Incidentally, there was a proposal at the beginning of 1955 to pay compensation for *every year spent inside.* This was only natural, and such payments were in fact being made in Eastern Europe. But not to so many people and not for so many years! They totted it all up, and were horrified: "We shall ruin the state!" So they opted for two months' compensation.

Ukrainian woman had been given ten years because her husband was a supporter of Bandera. She was now called upon to admit that she was in because he was a *bandit.* "No, I won't say it!" "Say it, and you'll go free!" "No, I won't say it. He's no bandit, he's in the OUN."* "All right, if you don't want to go—you can stay!" said Solovyov, chairman of the commission. A few days later her husband visited her, on his way home from the North. He had been sentenced to twenty-five years, but he readily admitted that he was a bandit, and was pardoned. He showed no appreciation of his wife's staunchness and heaped reproaches on her. "Why didn't you say that I was the devil himself, that you'd seen my tail and my cloven hoof? How am I going to manage the farm and the children now?"

I should mention that Skripnikova herself refused to acknowledge her guilt, and remained inside another three years.

So even the era of freedom came to the Archipelago in a public prosecutor's gown.

All the same, the alarm of the practical workers was not baseless. In 1955–1956 the stars over the Archipelago were in a conjunction never seen before. These were fateful years for it, and might have been its last!

If the people who were invested with supreme power and weighed down with the fullness of their knowledge about their country had also been steeped in that Doctrine of theirs, but believed in it genuinely and wholeheartedly, surely those years were the time for them to look back in horror and to sob aloud. How can they gain admittance to the "kingdom of Communism" with that bloody sack at their backs? It oozes blood; their backs are one great crimson stain! They have let out the politicals—but who or what has produced all those millions of nonpolitical (and nonprofessional) criminals? Our "relations of production"? *The social milieu?* We ourselves? . . . *You,* perhaps?

They should have let their space program go to hell! Let Sukarno's navy and Kwame Nkrumah's guard regiments look after themselves! They might at least have sat down and scratched their heads: Where do we go next? Why are our laws, the best in the world, rejected by millions of our citizens? What makes them so ready to crawl under that murderous yoke—and the more intolerable it is, the more densely they flock to shoulder it? What must we do to stem the stream? Perhaps our laws are not what

they should be? (And here it would be worth thinking a little about the harassed schools, the neglected countryside, and all those things which we can only call "injustices," with no class label.) How are we to bring the fallen back to life? Not by cheap and facile gestures like the Voroshilov amnesty, but by a sympathetic effort to understand each of them, his case, and his character.

Should we *put an end* to the Archipelago or not? Or is it there *forever?* For forty years it has been an ulcer in our flesh—isn't that enough?

Evidently not! It is not enough! Nobody wants to tire the convolutions of his brain, there is no answering ring in the soul. Let the Archipelago stand for another fifty years while we get on with the Aswan dam and the unification of the Arabs!

Historians attracted to the ten-year reign of Nikita Khrushchev —when certain physical laws to which we had grown accustomed suddenly seemed to stop operating, when objects miraculously began defying the forces in the electromagnetic field, defying the pull of gravity—will inevitably be astounded to see how many opportunities were briefly concentrated in those hands, and how playfully, how frivolously they were used before they were nonchalantly tossed aside. Endowed with greater power than anyone in our history except Stalin, a power which though impaired was still enormous, he used it like Krylov's Mishka in the forest clearing, rolling his log first this way, then that, and all to no purpose. He was given the chance to draw the lines of freedom three times, five times more firmly, and he failed to understand his duty, abandoned it as though it were a game—for space, for maize, for rockets in Cuba, for Berlin ultimatums, for persecution of the church, for the splitting of Oblast Party Committees, for the battle with abstract art.

He never carried anything through to its conclusion—least of all the fight for freedom! Stir him up against the intelligentsia? Nothing could have been simpler. Use his hands, the hands that wrecked Stalin's camps, to reinforce the camps now? That was easily achieved! And just think *when!*

In 1956, the year of the Twentieth Congress, the first orders limiting relaxation of the camp regime were promulgated! They were extended in 1957—the year when Khrushchev achieved undivided power.

But the caste of practical workers was still not satisfied. Scenting victory, they went over to the offensive. We can't go on like

this! The camp system is the main prop of the Soviet regime and it is collapsing!

For the most part, their influence was of course brought to bear discreetly—at official banquets, in the passenger cabins of aircraft, at dacha boating parties—but their activities sometimes came out into the open, as for instance in B. I. Samsonov's speech at a session of the Supreme Soviet (December, 1958): Prisoners, said he, live *too well,* they are satisfied (!) with their food (whereas they should be permanently dissatisfied . . .), they are treated *too well.* (In a parliament which had never acknowledged its earlier guilt, no one of course rebuked Samsonov.) Or in the article about "The Man Behind Bars" (1960).

Yielding to this pressure, without examining anything closely, without pausing to reflect that crime had not increased in those last five years (or that if it had, the causes must be sought in the political system), without considering how these new measures could be squared with his faith in the triumphal advance of Communism, or attempting to study the matter in detail, or even to look at it with his own eyes—this Tsar who had spent "all his life on the road" light-heartedly signed the order for nails to knock the scaffold together again quickly, in its old shape and as sturdy as ever.

And all this happened in the very year—1961—when Nikita made his last, expiring effort to tug the cart of freedom up into the clouds. It was in 1961—the year of the Twenty-second Congress—that a decree was promulgated on the death penalty in the camps for "terrorist acts against reformed prisoners [in other words, stoolies] and against supervisory staff" (something which had never happened), and the plenum of the Supreme Court confirmed (in June, 1961) *regulations for four disciplinary categories in camps*—Khrushchev's camps now, not Stalin's.

When he climbed onto the Congress platform for another attack on Stalin's tyranny, Nikita had only just allowed the screws of his very own system to be turned no less tight. And he sincerely believed that all this could be fitted together and made consistent!

The camps today are as approved by the Party before the Twenty-second Congress. Six years later they are just as they were then.

They differ from Stalin's camps not in regime, but in the composition of their population: there are no longer millions and millions of 58's. But there are still millions inside, and just as before, many

of them are helpless victims of perverted justice: swept in simply to keep the system operating and well fed.

Rulers change, the Archipelago remains.

It remains because *that particular* political regime could not survive without it. If it disbanded the Archipelago, it would cease to exist itself.

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Every story must have an end. It must be broken off somewhere. To the best of our modest and inadequate ability we have followed the history of the Archipelago from the crimson volleys which greeted its birth to the pink mists of rehabilitation. In the glorious period of leniency and disarray on the eve of Khrushchev's measures to make the camps harsher again, on the eve of a new Criminal Code, let us consider our story ended. Other historians will appear—historians who to their sorrow know the Khrushchev and post-Khrushchev camps better than we do.

Two have in fact appeared already: S. Karavansky[7] and Anatoly Marchenko.[8] And they will float to the surface in great numbers, because soon, very soon, the era of publicity will arrive in Russia!

Marchenko's book, for instance, fills with pain and horror even the heart of an old camp hand, inured to suffering as it is. In its description of prison conditions today it gives us a jail of a Still Newer Type than the one of which my own witnesses speak. We learn that the horn, the second horn of imprisonment (see Part I, Chapter 12), juts more boldly, sticks in the prisoner's neck more sharply than ever. By comparing the buildings of the Vladimir Central Prison—the Tsarist and the Soviet buildings—Marchenko shows concretely where the analogy with the Tsarist period of Russian history breaks down: the Tsarist building is dry and warm, the Soviet building damp and cold (your ears may get frostbitten in your cell! padded jackets are never taken off); the windows of the Tsarist building are blocked with four layers of Soviet bricks—and don't forget the muzzles!

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7. S. Karavansky, "Petition," samizdat, 1966.
8. A. Marchenko, *My Testimony*, samizdat, 1967; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1969.

The NKVD men are a power in the land. And they will never give way of their own free will. If they stood their ground in 1956 they can certainly hold out a bit longer.

It isn't just the corrective labor organs. It isn't just the Ministry for the Protection of Public Order. We have seen already how eagerly newspapers and deputies to the Supreme Soviet support them.

Because they are the backbone. The backbone of so many things.

They have strength, but that is not all—they have arguments, too. Debate with them is not so easy.

I have tried it.

Not that I ever meant to. But those letters drove me to it—letters from today's natives which took me completely by surprise. The natives looked at me in hope and begged me to tell their story, to defend them, to make them human again!

But—tell whom? Supposing that anyone will listen to me . . . If we had a free press I would publish all this: There, it's all out in the open, now let's discuss it!

As things are at present (January, 1964) I wander around the corridors of institutions, a secret and timid suppliant, bow my head to the hatches through which passes are issued, feel upon myself the disapproving and suspicious stare of the soldiers on duty. How hard a writer and commentator on public affairs must work before busy government officials will do him the honor, will condescend to lend him an ear for half an hour!

But even this is not the greatest difficulty. My greatest difficulty is just what it was all that time ago at the foremen's meeting in Ekibastuz: what can I talk to them *about?* And *in what language?*

To speak any of my real thoughts, as set out in this book, would be both dangerous and completely hopeless. Why lose my head in the hushed privacy of an inner office, unheard by the public, unbeknown to all those who long to hear it, and without advancing the cause a single millimeter?

How, then, can I speak? As I cross their mirrorlike marble thresholds, go up their softly carpeted stairways, I must voluntarily trammel myself with silken threads drawn through my tongue, my ears, my eyelids, and then stitched to my shoulders, the skin of my back, and my belly. I must at the very least voluntarily accept two things:

1. All praise to the Party, for our whole past, present, and

future! (Which means that our general penal policy cannot be wrong.) I dare not express my doubts as to whether the Archipelago need ever have existed. And I must not maintain that "the majority are inside for no good reason."

2. The high-ranking personages with whom I shall be talking are dedicated to their work and concerned for the prisoners. They must not be accused of insincerity, coldness, or ignorance (if a man puts his whole heart into a job, how can he possibly not know all about it!).

Much more dubious are *my* motives in interfering. What am I up to? Why me, when I have no official duty to perform? Perhaps I have some dirty ends of my own? . . . Why must I meddle, when the Party sees everything, and will get it all right with no assistance from me?

To make my position look a little stronger, I choose the month of my nomination for a Lenin Prize,* and I make my move, like a pawn of some importance: he may yet go up in the world and become a rook!

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Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. Legislative Proposals Commission. I discover that it has been engaged for some years in drafting a new Corrective Labor Code, a Code, that is, to govern the whole future life of the Archipelago, replacing the 1933 Code, which existed and yet never existed, which might as well never have been written. And now they have arranged to see me so that I, an alumnus of the Archipelago, can acquaint myself with their wisdom, and put before them my own trumpery notions.

They are eight in number. Four of them are surprisingly young, boys who may just about have had time to complete their higher education, and then again may not. How quickly they are rising to positions of power! They look so much at home in this marble-floored palace to which I was admitted with great precautions. The chairman of the commission is Ivan Andreyevich Badukhin, an elderly man, who seems infinitely good-natured. His looks seem to say that if it depended on him, he would disband the Archipelago tomorrow. But his role is this: to take a back seat and say nothing throughout our conversation. The real beasts of prey are two little old men, just like those old men in Griboyedov, who remembered "Ochakov taken and Tartary subdued,"* set fast in

postures adopted long ago. I will take my oath that they have not even opened a newspaper since March 5, 1953, so sure is it that nothing capable of influencing their views can ever happen. One of them wears a blue coat, and I imagine that it is some sort of uniform worn at Catherine's court. I can even distinguish the mark left when he unpinned Catherine's silver star, which must have half-covered his chest. Both old men totally disapprove of me and my visit from the moment I cross the threshold, but they are determined to make a show of tolerance.

It's never harder to speak than when you have too much to say. Besides, I have all these threads stitched onto me, and I feel them with every movement I make.

Still, I have my main harangue ready, and I anticipate no painful tugs at the strings. I speak as follows:

Where does the idea come from (I pretend to assume that it is not theirs) that the prison camps are in danger of becoming *health resorts,* and that unless a camp is garrisoned by cold and hunger, blessed ease will enthrone itself there? I ask them in spite of their defective personal experience to try and imagine the densely ringed stockade of privations and punishments which is the reality of imprisonment: a man is deprived of his native place; he lives with men with whom he has no wish to live; he wants to live with his family and friends, but cannot; he does not see his children growing up; he is deprived of his normal surroundings, his home, his belongings, right down to his wristwatch; his name is disgraced, and forgotten; he is deprived of freedom of movement; denied as a rule even the possibility of working at his own trade; he feels the constant pressure of strangers, some of them hostile to him, of other prisoners, whose background, outlook, and habits are different from his; denied the softening influence of the other sex (not to mention the physical deprivation); and even the medical attention he gets is incomparably poorer. In what way does all this resemble a Black Sea sanatorium? Why are they so much afraid of the "health resort" jibe?

No, this thought doesn't bowl them over. They aren't rocked in their chairs by it.

So I broaden my theme: *Do we or do we not want* to restore these people to society? If we do, why do we make them live like outcasts? Why is the whole content of our *disciplinary regimes* the systematic humiliation and physical exhaustion of prisoners? What advantage is it to the state to make cripples of them?

So, I've unburdened myself. And they start showing me where I am wrong. I have no real idea of what the present "contingent" is like, I judge from old impressions, I'm behind the times. (Yes, this is my weak spot: I cannot indeed *see* who is inside *now.*) For habitual criminals sentenced to close confinement, all the things in my list are no privation at all. The present disciplinary regimes are the only thing that can teach them sense. (Two painful jerks at my strings. They are the experts here. They know best *who is inside.*) Restore them to society? . . . Yes, of course, of course, the old men say in wooden voices, and what I hear is: "No, of course, let them all die; it'll make our lives easier—and yours, too."

The disciplinary regimes? One of the veterans of Ochakov, a public prosecutor—the one in blue, with the star on his chest, and sparse ringlets of gray hair, who even looks a little like Suvorov:

"We have already begun to see a *return* from the introduction of strict regimes. Instead of *two thousand murders a year"—here* it *can* be said—"there are only a few dozen."

An important figure. I make a discreet note of it. This appears to be the most useful result of my visit.

Who *is* inside? Of course, to argue about prison regimes you have to know who is inside. Dozens of psychologists and lawyers would have to go and talk to the prisoners without obstruction—then we should be in a position to argue. This is just the one thing my camp correspondents never put in their letters—why they and their comrades are inside.[9]

The general part of our discussion is at an end, and we turn to particulars. The commission, of course, has no doubts, and has already made up its mind about everything. I can be of no use to them; they were merely curious to know what I look like.

Parcels? Only five kilograms at a time, and at the same intervals as at present. I suggest that they should at least double the number allowed, and make the parcels eight kilograms each. "They're hungry in there! Starvation is no way to reform criminals!"

9. The great variety of these *habitual criminals* defeats the imagination. In the Tavdinsk colony, for instance, there is an eighty-seven-year-old, formerly an officer in the Tsar's army, and probably in one of the White armies, too. By 1962 he had served eighteen years of his *second twenty.* He has a beard like Father Christmas and works as a tally clerk in a glove factory. We can't help wondering whether forty years' imprisonment is not rather a high price to pay for the beliefs of your youth. And there are so many unfortunates of this sort—each of them unique. We should have to find out about *every one* of them before we could form a judgment on the regime imposed on them *all.*

"What do you mean, hungry?" The commission's indignation is unanimous. "We've *been there ourselves,* and seen left-over bread *carried out of a camp by the truckload!*" (For the warders' pigs, you mean?)

What can I do? Shout: "You're lying! That just can't be true" —but I feel a painful tug at my tongue, attached by a thread running over my shoulders to a place behind my back. I must not violate our working assumptions: they are well-informed, they are sincere, they care. Shall I show them the letters from my zeks? It would all be Greek to them, and the well-thumbed, crumpled scraps of paper would look absurd and contemptible on the red velvet tablecloth.

"But it costs the state nothing to allow more parcels!"

"Ah, but *who* will benefit from them?" they retort. "Mainly rich families. [They use the word "rich": realistic discussion of policy cannot do without it.] Those who have a lot of stolen goods hidden outside. So that by increasing the number of parcels, we should put *working families* at a disadvantage!"

Now the threads are cutting and tearing! This is an unchallengeable assumption: the interests of the toiling strata are above everything else. They are of course only sitting here for the good of the toiling strata.

I find myself lost for an answer. I don't know what retort I can make. I could say, "I'm not convinced"—and a fat lot they would care. What do I think I am—their boss or something?

I keep pushing. "What about the shops? Where does the socialist principle of remuneration come in? If a man's earned something, give it to him!"

They hit back. "He has to build up reserves for when he is released! Otherwise when he gets out he becomes a charge on the state."

The interests of the state come first—that's stitched on my back; I dare not tug at it. Nor can I suggest that prisoners' wages should be raised *at the state's expense.*

"Well, at least let their Sundays off be sacrosanct!"

"That's provided for—they are."

"But there are dozens of ways of ruining a Sunday in camp. Say expressly that no one must do so!"

"We can't include such minute regulations in the Code."

The camps work an eight-hour day. I half-heartedly put it to them that seven hours is enough, but in my own mind I know that

this is impertinence: it isn't a twelve- or a ten-hour day—will you never be satisfied?

"Correspondence gives the prisoner a feeling of participation in the life of our socialist society. [Such were the arguments I had taught myself to use.] Why restrict it?"

But they cannot reconsider. The allowance is fixed, and not so harshly as in our day.... They show me also the schedule of visits—including "private" three-day visits—and we, of course, had none at all for years, so this seems tolerable. Indeed, the arrangements for visits seem quite generous to me, and I barely restrain myself from praising them.

I am tired. I am completely sewn up, I can't stir a muscle. I'm doing no good here. It's time to go.

And indeed, seen from this bright, festive room, from these comfortable armchairs, to the accompaniment of their smoothly flowing eloquence, the camps look not horrible but quite rational. You see—left-over bread by the truckload. Well, would *you* let these terrible people loose on the community? I remember the master thieves and their ugly mugs.... It's ten years since I was in myself; how can I begin to guess who is there now. My sort, the politicals, are supposed to have been freed.... The national groups have been released....

The other disagreeable old man wants my views on hunger strikes: surely I cannot disapprove of forced feeding if the food given is more nourishing than gruel?[10]

I get up on my hind legs and bellow at them that a zek has every right not only to go on a hunger strike—his only means of self-defense—but to starve himself to death.

My arguments seem crazy to them. But I am all sewn up: I cannot talk about the connection between hunger strikes and public opinion in the country at large.

I leave, feeling tired and jaded. I even feel a little less sure of myself, whereas they are not the least bit shaken. They will do just as they please, and the Supreme Soviet will confirm it unanimously.

■

10. But from Marchenko we learn of a new practice: pouring hot water down the tube to damage the esophagus.

Vadim Stepanovich Tikunov, Minister for the Protection of Public Order. What wild fantasy is this? Can I, the miserable convict Shch 232, be on my way to teach the Minister of Internal Affairs how to run the Archipelago! . . .

On the approaches to the Minister, nothing but colonels, bullet-headed, sleekly pallid, but very agile. No door leads on beyond the chief secretary's room. Where it should be stands an enormous mirror-fronted cupboard with gathered silk curtains behind the glass, big enough to take two men on horseback—and this turns out to be the vestibule of the Minister's sanctum. His office would seat two hundred comfortably.

The Minister himself is unhealthily fat, with a heavy jaw; his face is a trapezium, broadening toward the chin. Throughout the conversation his manner is strictly official; he hears me out as a matter of duty, but with no sign of interest.

I launch at him the same old tirade about "health resorts." And once again, the same old questions: Is it our common aim (his and mine!) to *reform* the zeks? (My views on "reform" are behind us in Part IV.) Why the sharp change of course in 1961? Why those four camp regimes? I repeat boring things for him, all the things I have written in this chapter—about diet, camp shops, parcels, clothing, work, bullying warders, the mentality of the practical workers. (I have chosen not to bring the letters, in case someone here pounces on them, and have simply copied out excerpts, omitting the authors' names.) I go on talking to him for forty minutes or an hour—it seems a very long time anyway—and I am surprised myself that he is listening to me.

He interrupts now and then, but only to accept or reject some statement outright. He does not attempt a crushing refutation. I was expecting a blank wall of arrogance, but he is much softer. He agrees with much of what I say! He agrees that shopping money must be increased, and that there should be more parcels and that there is no need to define the contents of parcels as minutely as the Legislative Proposals Commission does (but this does not depend on him: the new Corrective Labor Code, not the Minister, will decide all these things). He agrees that prisoners should be allowed to boil or bake food they have acquired themselves (except that they never have any), and that there should be no limit on letters and printed matter sent through the mails (though this would put a great burden on the camp censorship). He is even

against martinets who overdo drills and line-ups (but it wouldn't be tactful to interfere: it's easy to wreck discipline, difficult to impose it). He agrees that the grass in the camp area should not be weeded out. (What had happened in Dubrovlag around the engineering workshops was quite another matter. They had planted little kitchen gardens, the machine operators busied themselves there during their break, and each man had two or three square meters sown with tomatoes or cucumbers. But the Minister ordered them to dig it all under, to destroy it at once, and he's proud of it. I tell him that "man's ties with the earth have a moral importance," and he tells me that individual garden plots foster property-owning instincts.) The Minister even shudders at the thought that people had been sent back behind the wire after living outside. (I don't like to ask what his position was at the time and what he did to prevent it.) More than all this, the Minister acknowledges that *zeks are kept in harsher conditions now* than in the days of Ivan Denisovich.

This being so, I need not waste my time persuading him! There is nothing for us to discuss. (And it is pointless for him to take note of suggestions from someone with no official position.)

What can I suggest? Breaking up the whole Archipelago, and letting prisoners live without guards? I can't get the words out. It's utopian. And anyway, the solution of a big problem never depends on a single individual; it winds snakelike through many departments, and is at home in none.

On the other hand, the Minister is emphatically sure that the striped uniform for habitual criminals is necessary. ("If you only knew what sort of people they are!") My critical remarks about warders and convoy troops simply offend him: "You are confused, or else your own experiences have given you a peculiar way of looking at things." He assures me that you can no longer round up recruits for the prison service, because *the old privileges have been done away with.* ("It shows a healthy attitude on the part of ordinary people if they won't join up," I almost exclaim—but I feel the warning tug of the strings at my ears, my eyelids, my tongue. However, I am overlooking something: it's only sergeants and corporals who *won't join;* you can't keep the officers out.) They have to make use of conscripts. Contradicting me again, the Minister tells me that only prisoners use vulgar abuse, while warders are invariably correct in their manner of speaking to prisoners.

When there is such a discrepancy between the letters of insignificant zeks and the words of a minister, whom shall we believe? Clearly, the prisoners are lying.

He even quotes his own observation at first hand. Because he, of course, *does* see something of the camps, and I do not. Perhaps I would like to visit one? Kryukovo, or Dubrovlag? (These two names come to him so easily that they are obviously Potemkin structures.* Besides, *in what capacity* would I go? As a ministry inspector? If I did, I couldn't look the zeks in the face. . . . I refuse.)

The Minister, disagreeing with me, expresses the view that zeks lack feeling and do not respond to the efforts made for them. You go to the Magnitogorsk colony, and ask: "Any complaints about your treatment?" and—with the head of the Camp Division standing by—would you believe it, they shout in chorus, "None!"

Now for what the Minister sees as "splendid results of the re-education program in the camps":

A machine operator's pride when the head of his Camp Division commended him.

The pride of prisoners whose work (they made kettles) was destined for heroic Cuba.

The reports and elections of Internal Order Sections (that is, "A Bitch Went Walking").*

The abundance of flowers (provided by the state) in Dubrovlag.

His main concern is to create in every camp an industrial base of its own. The Minister reckons that by increasing the number of interesting jobs he can cut out escape attempts.[11] (When I object that all human beings long for freedom, he simply doesn't understand.)

I left with the weary conviction that *there was no end to it.* That I had not advanced my cause by a hairbreadth and that they would always take a sledge hammer to crack a nut. I left depressed by the realization that two human minds could think so differently. Zek will understand minister when he ensconces himself in a ministerial sanctum, and minister will understand zek when he, too, goes behind the wire, has his own garden plot trodden down,

11. All the more easily because, as we now know from Marchenko, they no longer try to catch escapers, but just shoot them down.

and in return for his freedom is offered the chance to master a machine.

Institute for the Study of the Origins of Criminality. This was an interesting discussion with two cultured deputy directors and several members of the research staff—lively people, each with his own opinions, given to arguing among themselves. Afterward, V. N. Kudryavtsev, one of the deputy directors, chided me as he led me along the corridor: "It's all very well, but you don't take all points of view into account. Now, Tolstoi would have done so. . . ." And suddenly I found that he had tricked me into taking a wrong turn. "We'll just look in and meet the director, Igor Ivanovich Karpets."

This visit was not part of the plan! We'd finished our discussion —what was the point of it? Well, all right, I'll drop in to shake hands! I need not have expected a polite exchange of greetings here. It was hard to believe that the deputy directors and heads of section I had seen worked for a boss like this, that he presided over all their research. (The most important thing about him I would learn much later: Karpets was vice-president of the International Association of *Democratic Lawyers!*)

The man who rose to meet me was hostile and disdainful (as I remember it, we remained on our feet throughout our five-minute conversation), as if he were reluctantly granting an interview for which I had begged and pleaded. In his face I saw well-fed prosperity, firmness, and distaste (for me). With no thought for his nice suit, he had pinned a large badge on his chest as though it were a medal: a vertical sword piercing something down below, over the legend "MVD." (This appears to be a very important badge. It shows that the wearer has had "clean hands, fire in his heart, and a cool head" much longer than most.)

"Let's have it, then—what've you been talking about?" he asks with a scowl.

I have no use for him at all, but out of politeness I repeat some of it.

"Oh, that," says the Democratic Lawyer, as though he had heard enough. "Liberalization, eh? Babying the zeks?"

Then, suddenly, out they come—full answers to all the questions which I had carried in vain over marble floors and between mirrored walls.

Raise the living standards of prisoners? *Can't be done!* Be-

cause the free people around the camp would be living *less well* than the zeks, which cannot be allowed.

Receive parcels frequently, and bigger ones? *Can't be done!* Because this would have a bad effect on the warders, who get no food from Moscow shops.

Reprimand warders and teach them to behave better? *Can't be done!* We're trying to hold on to them! Nobody wants the job, we can't pay much, and some of their privileges have been taken away.

We deny prisoners payment for their work according to socialist principles? Their own fault—they've cut themselves off from our socialist society!

But don't we want to reclaim them for normal life?! . . .

Reclaim them??? The sword-bearer is astonished. "That's not what the camps are about. A camp is a place of retribution!"

Retribution! The word fills the whole room.

Retribution!

Rrrretrrribution!!!

The sword stands upright—to smite, to pierce. You'll never ease it out again!

Rret-rrib-ution!!

The Archipelago was, the Archipelago remains, the Archipelago will stand forever!

Without it, who can be made to suffer for the errors of the Vanguard Doctrine? For the fact that people will not grow into the shapes devised for them?

Chapter 3

■

The Law Today

The reader has seen throughout this book that from the very beginning of the Stalin age there have been no *politicals* in our country. The crowds, the millions driven past while you watched, all those millions of 58's, were merely common *criminals.*

Besides, merry, mouthy Nikita Sergeyevich took so many bows from so many platforms: *Politicals?* Not a one!! We just don't have them!

And as grief grew forgetful, as distance softened craggy contours, as fat formed under the skin—we almost believed it! Even former zeks did. Millions of zeks were released for all to see—so perhaps there really were no politicals left? We had returned, others joined us, our friends and families were back. The gaps in our little world of urban intellectuals seemed to be filled, the ring closed. You could sleep undisturbed, and no one would have been taken from the house when you awoke. Friends would telephone —no one was missing. Not that we altogether believed it—but for practical purposes we accepted that there were no longer any politicals in jail. Well, yes, even today (1968) a few hundred Balts are not allowed to go home to their republics, and the curse has not been lifted from the Crimean Tatars—but very soon, no doubt . . . From outside, as always (as indeed under Stalin), all was clean and tidy, nothing showed.

And Nikita was there, glued to his platform. "There can be no return to deeds and occurrences such as these, either in the Party or in the country generally" (May 22, 1959—that was before Novocherkassk). "Now everyone in our country can breathe freely . . . with no need to worry about the present or the future"

(March 8, 1963, *after* Novocherkassk).

Novocherkassk! A town of fateful significance in Russia's history. As though the Civil War had not left scars enough, it thrust itself beneath the saber yet again.

Novocherkassk! A whole town rebels—and every trace is licked clean and hidden. Even under Khrushchev the fog of universal ignorance remained so thick that no one abroad got to know about Novocherkassk, there were no Western broadcasts to inform us of it, and even local rumor was stamped out before it could spread, so that the majority of our fellow citizens do not know what event is associated with the name Novocherkassk and the date June 2, 1962.

Let me then put down here all that I have been able to gather.

We can say without exaggeration that this was a turning point in the modern history of Russia. If we leave out the Ivanovo weavers at the beginning of the thirties (theirs was a large-scale strike, but it ended without violence), the flare-up at Novocherkassk was the first time the people had spoken out in forty-one years (since Kronstadt and Tambov): unorganized, leaderless, unpremeditated, it was a cry from the soul of a people who could no longer live as they had lived.

On Friday, June 1, one of those carefully considered enactments of which Khrushchev was so fond was published throughout the Union—raising the prices of meat and butter. On that very same day, as demanded by another and quite separate economic plan, piece rates at the huge Electric Locomotive Works in Novocherkassk (NEVZ) were lowered, in some cases by 30 percent. That morning the workers in two shops (the forge and the foundry), usually obedient creatures of habit, geared to their jobs, could not force themselves to work—so hot had things become for them. Their loud, excited discussions developed into a spontaneous mass meeting. An everyday event in the West, an extraordinary one for us. Neither the engineers nor the chief engineer himself could persuade them. Kurochkin, the works manager, arrived. When the workers asked him, "What are we going to live on now?" this well-fed parasite answered: "You're used to guzzling meat pies—put jam in them instead." He and his retinue barely escaped being torn to pieces. (Perhaps if he had answered differently it would all have blown over.)

By noon the strike had spread throughout the enormous locomotive works. (Runners were sent to other factories, where the

workers wavered but did not come out in support.) The Moscow-Rostov railway line runs close to the works. Either to make sure that the news would reach Moscow more quickly, or to prevent troops and tanks from moving in, a large number of women sat down on the tracks to hold up trains, whereupon the men began pulling up the rails and building barriers. Strike action of such boldness is unusual in the history of the Russian workers' movement. Slogans appeared on the works building: "Down with Khrushchev!" "Use Khrushchev for sausage meat!"

While all this was happening, troops and police began converging on the works (which stands, with its settlement, three to four kilometers from Novocherkassk, across the river Tuzlov). Tanks took up position on the bridge over the Tuzlov. From evening until the following morning, movement inside the city or across the bridge was completely forbidden. Even during the night the workers' settlement did not quiet down for a moment. Overnight about thirty workers were arrested as "ringleaders" and carried off to the city police station.

On the morning of June 2, some other enterprises in the town struck (but by no means all of them). Another spontaneous mass meeting at NEVZ decided on a protest march into the town to demand the release of the arrested workers. The procession (only about three hundred strong to begin with—you had to be brave!), with women and children in its ranks, carrying portraits of Lenin and peaceful slogans, marched over the bridge past the tanks without obstruction, then uphill into the town. Here their numbers were quickly swelled by curious onlookers, individual workers from other enterprises, and little boys. At several places in the city people stopped lorries and used them as platforms for speech-making. The whole town was seething. The NEVZ demonstrators marched along the main street (Moskovskaya) and some of them began trying to break down the locked doors of the town police station in the belief that their arrested comrades were inside. They were met with pistol shots. Further on, the street led to the Lenin monument[1] and by two narrow paths around a public garden to the headquarters of the town Party committee (formerly the ataman's palace, in which General Kaledin had shot himself in 1918). All the streets were choked with people and here, on the square,

1. It had replaced Klodt's statue of Ataman Platonov, which had been melted down for scrap.

the crowd was densest. Many little boys had climbed trees in the garden to get a better view.

The Party offices were found to be empty—the city authorities had fled to Rostov.[2] Inside the building there was broken glass and the floors were strewn with documents, as they must have been after a retreat in the Civil War. A couple of dozen workers walked through the palace, came out on its long balcony, and harangued the crowd in halting speeches.

It was about 11 A.M. There were no police to be seen in the town, but there were more and more troops. (A revealing picture: at the first slight shock the civil authorities hid behind the army.) Soldiers had occupied the post office, the radio station, the bank. By this time the whole of Novocherkassk was beleaguered, and every entry and exit barred. (For this task they had brought in, among others, cadets from the officers' training schools in Rostov, leaving some behind to patrol that city.) Tanks crawled slowly along Moskovskaya Street, following the route the demonstrators had taken toward Party headquarters. Boys started scrambling onto the tanks and obstructing the observation slits. The tanks fired a few blank shells, rattling the windows of shops and houses all along the street. The boys scattered and the tanks crawled on.

And the students? Novocherkassk is of course a town of students! Where were they all? . . . The students of some institutes, including the Polytechnic, and of some technical secondary schools, had been *locked in* their dormitories or in other school buildings from early morning. Their rectors had thought quickly. But we may as well say it: the students for their part showed little civic courage. They were presumably glad of this excuse to do nothing. It would take more than the turn of a key to hold back rebel students in the West today (and took more in Russia in days gone by).

A scuffle broke out inside the Party building, step by step the speakers were dragged back inside and soldiers emerged onto the balcony, more and more of them. (Remember how the military observed the Kengir mutiny from the balcony of the Steplag head

2. The First Secretary of the Rostov Oblast Party Committee, Basov, whose name, together with that of Pliev, commander of the North Caucasus Military District, will one day be inscribed over the site of the mass shooting, had arrived in Novocherkassk in the meantime, but had rushed back to Rostov in terror. (It is even said that he made his escape by jumping from a second-story balcony.) Immediately after the Novocherkassk events, he went with a delegation to heroic Cuba.

office?) A file of riflemen began forcing the crowd back from the small square immediately before the palace, toward the railings of the garden. (Several witnesses say unanimously that *these* soldiers were all non-Russians—Caucasians brought in from the other end of the oblast to replace the cordon from the local garrison previously posted there. But not all witnesses agree that the previous cordon had been ordered to open fire, and that the order was not carried out because the captain who received it killed himself in front of his men rather than pass it on.[3] That an officer committed suicide is beyond doubt, but accounts of the circumstances are vague and no one knows the name of this hero of conscience.) The crowd backed away, but no one expected the worst. It is not known who gave the order,[4] but *these* soldiers raised their rifles and fired a first volley over the heads of the crowd.

Perhaps General *Pliev** had no immediate intention of firing on the crowd; perhaps the situation got out of hand. The burst fired over the heads of the crowd found the trees in the little garden and the boys who had climbed into them, some of whom fell to the ground. The crowd, it seems, gave a roar, whereupon the soldiers, whether at a command, or because they saw red, or in panic, started firing freely into the crowd, and—yes—with dumdum bullets.[5] (Remember Kengir? The sixteen at the guardhouse?) The crowd fled in panic, jamming the narrow paths around the garden, but the troops *went on firing at their backs as they retreated.* They continued firing until the large square beyond the garden and the Lenin statue was completely empty—all along the former Platovsky Prospekt, and as far as Moskovskaya Street. (An eyewitness says that the area looked like one great mound of corpses. But many of those lying there were of course only wounded.) Information from a variety of sources is more or less unanimous that some seventy or eighty people were killed.[6] The soldiers looked around for lorries and buses, commandeered them, loaded them with the dead and the wounded, and dispatched them to the high-walled military hospital. (For a day or two afterward these buses went around with bloodstained seats.)

3. According to this version, the soldiers who refused to fire into the crowd were exiled to Yakutya.

4. Those who stood near enough know, but they were either killed or taken out of circulation.

5. There is reliable evidence that forty-seven were killed by dumdum bullets alone.

6. Rather fewer than before the Winter Palace, yet all Russia was outraged by January 9 and observed its anniversary yearly. When shall we begin commemorating June 2?

That day, just as in Kengir, movie cameras took pictures of the rebels on the streets.

The firing ceased, the terror passed, the crowd poured back onto the square, and *was fired upon again.*

All this happened between noon and 1 P.M.

This is what an observant witness saw at 2 P.M.: "There are about eight tanks of different types standing on the square in front of Party headquarters. A cordon of soldiers stands before them. The square is almost deserted, there are only small groups of people, mostly youngsters, standing about and shouting at the soldiers. On the square puddles of blood have formed in the depressions in the pavement. I am not exaggerating; I never suspected till now that there could be so much blood. The benches in the public garden are spattered with blood, there are bloodstains on its sanded paths and on the whitewashed tree trunks in the public garden. The whole square is scored with tank tracks. A red flag, which the demonstrators had been carrying, is propped against the wall of Party headquarters, and a gray cap splashed with red-brown blood has been slung over the top of its pole. Across the façade of the Party building hangs a red banner, there for some time past: 'The People and the Party are one.'

"People go up to the soldiers, to curse them or to appeal to their conscience. 'How could you do it?' 'Who did you think you were shooting at?' 'Your own people you were shooting at!' They make excuses: 'It wasn't us! We've only just been brought in and posted here. We had nothing to do with it.'

"That's how efficient our murderers are (and yet people talk about bureaucratic sluggishness). *Those* soldiers have already been taken away, and perplexed Russians put in their place. He knows his business, that General Pliev. . . ."

Toward five or six o'clock the square gradually filled with people again. (They *were* brave, the people of Novocherkassk! The town radio kept appealing to them: "Citizens, do not fall for provocation, go home quietly!" The riflemen still stood there, the blood had not been mopped up, and again they pressed forward.) Shouts from the crowd, more and more people, and another impromptu meeting. They knew by now that six senior members of the Central Committee had flown in (probably arriving before the first shootings?), among them, needless to say, Mikoyan (the expert on Budapest-type situations) and Frol Kozlov. (The names of the other four are not known for certain.) They stayed in the

KUKKS* building (formerly the headquarters of the Cadet Corps), as though it were a fortress. And a delegation of younger workers from NEVZ was sent to tell them what had happened. A buzz went through the crowd: "Let Mikoyan come down here! Let him see all this blood for himself!" Mikoyan wouldn't come down, thank you. But a reconnaissance helicopter flew low over the square around six o'clock. Inspected it. Flew off again.

Shortly afterward the workers' delegation came back from KUKKS. As agreed, the military cordon let the delegates through and officers escorted them to the balcony of the Party building. Silence. The delegates reported to the crowd that they had seen the Central Committee members and told them about this "bloody Saturday," and that *Kozlov had wept* when he heard about the children falling from the trees at the first volley. (You know Frol Kozlov, the Leningrad Party gang boss, the cruelest of Stalinists? He wept! . . .) The Central Committee members had promised to investigate these events and severely punish those responsible (the very promises made to us in Osoblag), but for the present everyone must go home to prevent the outbreak of fresh disorders in the town.

The meeting, however, did not disperse! The crowd grew ever denser toward the evening. The desperate courage of Novocherkassk! (There is a story that the Politburo team made the decision that evening to *deport the whole population of the town, every last one of them!* I can believe this; it would have been nothing extraordinary after the deportation of nations. Wasn't the same Mikoyan close to Stalin when that happened?)

Around nine in the evening they tried to drive the people away from the palace with tanks. But as soon as the drivers switched on their engines people clustered around the tanks, blocking the hatches and the observation slits. The tanks stalled. The riflemen stood by and made no effort to help the tank crews.

An hour later tanks and armored personnel carriers appeared from the opposite side of the square, with an escort of Tommy-gunners perched on top of them. (Our battle experience counts for something! We are the ones who defeated the Fascists!) Advancing at high speed (to the jeers of young people on the footpaths—the students had been released toward evening), they cleared the roadways of Moskovskaya Street and the former Platovsky Prospekt.

At last, toward midnight, the riflemen began firing tracer bullets into the air and the crowd slowly dispersed.

(What power there is in a popular disturbance! How quickly it changes the whole political situation! The night before there had been a curfew, and people had been frightened anyway, but now the whole town was strolling about and hooting at the soldiers. A people transformed—can it be so near to breaking through the crust of this half-century, into a completely different atmosphere?)

On June 3 the town radio broadcast speeches by Mikoyan and Kozlov. Kozlov did not weep. Nor did they any longer promise to find the culprits (those in higher places). What they now said was that *these events were the result of enemy provocation,* and that *these enemies would be severely punished.* (The people had of course gone from the square by now.) Mikoyan said further that *dumdum bullets had never been adopted as part of the equipment of Soviet troops, and that they must therefore have been used by enemies of the state.*

(But who were these enemies? How had they parachuted into the country? Where were they hiding? Show us just one! We are so used to being treated like fools: "Enemies," they say, and all is explained. In the Middle Ages it was "devils.")[7]

The shops were immediately the richer for butter, sausage, and many other things not seen in those parts for a long time, or anywhere outside the capitals.

The wounded all vanished without trace; not one of them went home. Instead, the *families* of the wounded and the killed (who of course wanted to know what had become of their kin) *were deported to Siberia.* So were many of those involved in the demonstration who had been noticed or photographed. Some participants were dealt with in a series of trials in camera. There were also two "public" trials (with entry by ticket for factory Party officials and for the town apparatchiki). At one of these, nine men were sentenced to be shot and two women to fifteen years' imprisonment.

The membership of the town Party committee remained as before.

7. This is a woman schoolteacher (!) from Novocherkassk holding forth in a train in 1968: "The military did not shoot anyone. They fired only one warning burst into the air. The shooting was done by saboteurs, with dumdum bullets. Where did they get them? Saboteurs can get absolutely anything. They shot at soldiers and workers alike. . . . The workers seemed to go mad, attacked the soldiers and beat them—but how were the soldiers to blame? Afterward Mikoyan walked around the streets and went into people's houses to see how they lived. The women offered him strawberries. . . ." *This* is all that history has preserved to date.

On the Saturday following "bloody Saturday," the town radio announced that the "workers of the Electric Locomotive Works have solemnly undertaken to fulfill their seven-year plan ahead of time."

. . . If the Tsar had not been such a ninny, he would have realized that all he needed to do on January 9 in Petersburg was hunt down the workers carrying banners and pin charges of banditry on them. After that there would have been no "revolutionary movement" worth mentioning.

At Alexandrovo in 1961, a year before Novocherkassk, the police beat a man to death while he was under arrest and then would not allow his body to be carried past their "precinct" to the cemetery. The crowd was furious and burned down the police station. Arrests followed immediately. (There was a similar incident about the same time in Murom.) What would the appropriate charge now be? Under Stalin, even a tailor who stuck a needle in a newspaper could get Article 58. Now a more sensible view was taken: wrecking a police station should not be regarded as a political act. It was ordinary banditry. *Instructions were handed down* to this effect: "mass disorders" should not be treated as political offenses. (If they are not political, what is?)

So all at once—there were no more *politicals.*

But one stream has never dried up in the U.S.S.R., and still flows. A stream of criminals untouched by the "beneficent wave summoned to life . . ." etc. A stream which flowed uninterruptedly through all those decades—whether "Leninist norms were infringed" or strictly observed—and flowed in Khrushchev's day more furiously than ever.

I mean the believers. Those who resisted the new wave of cruel persecution, the wholesale closing of churches. Monks who were slung out of their monasteries (Krasnov-Levitin has given us a great deal of information about this). Stubborn sectarians, especially those who refused to perform military service: there's nothing we can do about it, we're really very sorry, but you're directly aiding imperialism; we let you off lightly nowadays—it's five years first time around.

These are in no sense politicals, they are "religionists," but still they have to be *re-educated.* Believers must be dismissed from their jobs merely for their faith; Komsomols must be sent along to break the windows of believers; believers must be officially compelled to attend antireligious lectures, church doors must be

cut down with blowtorches, domes pulled down with hawsers attached to tractors, gatherings of old women broken up with fire hoses. (Is this what you mean by *dialogue,* French comrades?)

As the monks of the Pochayev Monastery were told in the Soviet of Workers' Deputies: *"If we always observe Soviet laws, we shall have to wait a long time for Communism."*

Only in extreme cases, when *educational* methods do not help, is recourse to the *law* necessary.

Here we can dazzle the world with the diamond-pure nobility of our laws today. We no longer try people in closed courts, as under Stalin, we no longer try them in absentia, we try them semi-publicly (that is to say, in the presence of a semi-public).

I hold in my hand a record of the trial of some Baptists at Nikitovka in the Donbas, in January, 1964.

This is how it's done. On the pretense that their identity must be checked, the Baptists who arrived to attend the trial were held in jail for three days (until the trial was over, and to give them a fright). Someone (a free citizen!) who threw flowers to the defendants got ten days. So did a Baptist who kept a record of the trial, and his notes were taken away (but another record survived). A bunch of hand-picked Komsomols were let in before the general public by a side door, so that they could occupy the front rows. While the trial was in progress there were shouts from the spectators: "Pour kerosene over the lot and set fire to them!" The court did nothing to curb this righteous indignation. Typical of its procedures: it admitted the evidence of hostile neighbors and also that of terrorized minors; little girls of nine and eleven were brought before the court (who the hell cares what effect it has on them as long as we get our verdict). Their exercise books with texts from the Scriptures were introduced as exhibits.

One of the defendants, Bazbei, father of *nine* children, was a miner who had never received any support from the Union committee at his pit because he was a Baptist. But they managed to confuse his daughter Nina, a schoolgirl in the eighth grade, and to suborn her with fifty rubles from the Union committee and a promise to place her in an institute later on, so that during the investigation she made fantastic statements against her father: he had tried to poison her with a sour fruit drink; when the believers were hiding in the woods for their prayer meetings (because they were persecuted in the settlement) they had had a radio transmitter—"a tall tree with wire wound all around it." Af

these lying statements began to prey on Nina's mind, she became mentally ill and was put in the violent ward of an asylum. Nonetheless, she was produced in court in the expectation that she would stick to her evidence. But she repudiated every word of it! "The interrogator dictated what I had to say himself." It made no difference. The shameless judge ignored her latest statements and regarded only her earlier evidence as valid. (Whenever depositions favorable to the prosecution come unstuck, this is the typical and regular dodge used by the courts: they ignore what is brought out in court and base themselves on faked evidence obtained in the preliminary investigation: "Now, what do you mean by that? It says here in your deposition . . . You testified during the investigation . . . What right have you to retract now? That's an offense, too, you know!")

The judge is not at all interested in the substance of the case, in the truth. The Baptists are persecuted because they do not accept preachers sent by an atheist plenipotentiary of the state, but prefer their own. (Under Baptist rules, any brother can preach the Gospel.) There is a directive from the Oblast Party Committee: put them on trial and forcibly take their children from them. And this will be carried out, although with its left hand the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet has just (July 2, 1962) signed the world convention on "the fight against discrimination in the sphere of education."[8] One of its points is that "parents must be allowed to provide for the religious and moral education of their children in accordance with their own convictions." But that is precisely what we cannot allow! Anyone who speaks in court on the substance of the case, anyone who tries to clarify the issue, is invariably interrupted, diverted from his train of thought, deliberately confused by the judge, who conducts the debate on this level: "How can you talk about the end of the world when we are committed to the building of Communism?"

This is from the closing statement made by one young girl, Zhenya Khloponina. "Instead of going to the cinema or to dances, [illegible]ed to read the Bible and say my prayers—and just for that you [illegible] freedom from me. Yes, to be free is a great happi[illegible]ree from sin is a greater still. Lenin said that only [illegible]ussia did such shameful phenomena as religious

[illegible]ned it for the sake of the American Negroes. How else could it

persecution still exist. I've never been in Turkey and know nothing about it, but how things are in Russia you can see for yourselves." She was cut short.

The sentences: Two of them got five years in the camps, two of them four years, and Bazbei, father of all those children, got three. The defendants accepted their sentences *joyfully,* and said a prayer. The "representatives from enterprises" shouted: "Not long enough! Make it more!" (Throw kerosene over them and put a match to it. . . .)

The long-suffering Baptists took note and kept count: and set up a "Council of Prisoners' Relatives," which began issuing manuscript bulletins about all the persecutions. From these bulletins we learn that from 1961 to June, 1964, 197 Baptists were condemned, 15 of them women.[9] (They are all listed by name. Prisoners' dependents, now left without means of support, have also been counted: 442, of whom 341 are under school age.) The majority get five years of exile, but some get five years in a *strict* regime camp (narrowly escaping the hardened criminals' motley!), with three to five years of exile in addition. B. M. Zdorovets from Olshany in Kharkov oblast got seven years of strict regime for his faith. A seventy-six-year-old, Y. V. Arend, was put inside, as were the whole Lozovoy family (father, mother, and son). Yevgeny M. Sirokhin, a (Group 1) disabled veteran of the Fatherland War, *blind in both eyes,* was condemned in the village of Sokolovo, Zmievski district, Kharkov oblast, to three years in a camp for bringing up his children Lyuba, Nadya, and Raya as Christians, and they were taken away from him by order of the court.

The court trying the Baptist M. I. Brodovsky (at Nikolayev, October 6, 1966) was not too squeamish to use crudely faked documents; when the defendant protested—"This is dishonest of you!"—they barked back at him: "The *law* will crush you, smash you, destroy you!"

The law, my friend. Not one of your acts of "extrajudicial vengeance," as practiced in the years when "norms were still observed."

We recently got to know S. Karavansky's soul-chilling "Petition," which was transmitted from a camp to the outside world.

9. One of the trials of Populists a hundred years ago was called "the trial of the 193." Lord, what a fuss there was! What emotions were stirred! It even found its way into textbooks.

The author had been sentenced to twenty-five years, had served sixteen of them (1944–1960), had been released (evidently under the "two-thirds" rule), had married, had begun a university course —but no! In 1965 they came for him again. Get yourself ready! You still have nine years to go.

Where else is this possible, under what other code of law on earth except ours? They had hung *quarters* around people's necks like iron collars. Sentences which would end sometime in the seventies! Suddenly a new Code is promulgated (1961)—with no sentence higher than fifteen years. Even a first-year law student can see that those twenty-five-year sentences are thereby rescinded. Only we do not agree that they are. Yell yourself hoarse, beat your head on the wall if you like—they are not rescinded. We feel, rather, that you should step back inside and finish your time!

There are quite a few people like this. People who were not affected by the epidemic of releases under Khrushchev, the teammates, cellmates, transit prison acquaintances whom we left behind. We have long ago forgotten them in our new lives, but they still shuffle hopelessly, drearily, numbly about the same little patches of trampled earth, with the same watchtowers and barbed-wire fences all around them. The faces in the papers change, the speeches from platforms change, people fight against the *cult* and then stop fighting—but the twenty-five-year prisoners, Stalin's godchildren, are still inside. . . .

Karavansky cites the blood-freezing prison careers of several such people.

All you freedom-loving "left-wing" thinkers in the West! You left laborites! You progressive American, German, and French students! As far as you are concerned, none of this amounts to much. As far as you are concerned, this whole book of mine is a waste of effort. You may suddenly understand it all someday—but only when you *yourselves* hear "hands behind your backs there!" and step ashore on our Archipelago.

■

Still, there really is no comparison between the numbers of political prisoners now and in Stalin's time; they are no longer counted in millions or in hundreds of thousands.

Is this because the *law* has been reformed?

No, it is just that the ship has changed course (for a time).

Courtroom epidemics flare up just as they used to, lightening the labors of the legal brain. Even the newspapers will keep you abreast if you know how to read them: when they start writing about hooligans, you know that the courts are jailing people wholesale on charges of hooliganism; if they write about theft from the state, you know that the fashionable charge is embezzlement.

Zeks writing from today's colonies tell us despondently that:

"It is useless trying to find justice. What you read in the press is one thing; real life is another." (V.I.D.)

"I'm sick of being an outcast from my society and my people. But where can I get justice? The interrogator's word carries more weight than mine. Yet what knowledge or insight can she—a young girl of twenty-three—have? How can she possibly imagine the fate they can send a man to?" (V.K.)

"The reason they never reopen cases is that if they did, some of them might become redundant." (L——n)

"Stalinist methods of investigation and trial have simply migrated from the political to the criminal sphere, and that's all there is to it." (G.S.)

Let us note carefully what these suffering people have told us.

1. Retrial is impossible (because the judicial caste might collapse).
2. Nowadays they use the criminal clauses to make mincemeat of people, just as they once used Article 58. (If they did not, what would they feed on? And what would become of the Archipelago?)

Briefly—suppose one citizen wishes to rid the world of another whom he dislikes (not, of course, straightforwardly, with a knife between the ribs, but legally). What is the surest way of doing it? Formerly, he would have had to write a denunciation under Article 58-10. But now he should begin by consulting the *professionals* (investigating officers, policemen, court officials)—*that* sort of citizen always has friends of *this* sort—to find what is in fashion this year. For what type of offender are the nets being laid? In which category are the courts required to increase their yield? Find the appropriate clause, and stick that in him—it's as good as any knife.

Thus, a storm of accusations under the *Rape* clause raged for

a long time after Nikita in a heated moment ordered minimum sentences of twelve years. Thousands of hammers in every locality began busily riveting on twelve-year fetters—for the smiths must never stand idle! Now, this clause deals with delicate and very private matters. Weigh it carefully, and you will see that in some ways it resembles Article 58-10. The offenses covered by each are committed tête-à-tête, they are difficult to verify, they are shy of witnesses—and that is just what the courts require.

Take the S——v case. Two Leningrad women were summoned to the police station. Had they been at a party with some men? Yes. Had sexual intercourse taken place? (This had already been established with the aid of a reliable informer.) Er—yes. Right, then; which is it: did you take part in the sexual act voluntarily or against your will? If voluntarily, we shall have to regard you as prostitutes, you will hand over your passports and get out of Leningrad in forty-eight hours. If it was against your will, you must bring a charge of rape! The women were not a bit anxious to leave Leningrad! So the men got twelve years each.

Our obtuse, our blinkered, our hulking brute of a judicial system can live only if it is infallible. The brute is so strong and so sure of itself only because it never reconsiders its decisions, because every officer of the court can lay about him as he pleases in the certainty that no one will ever correct him. To this end there exists a tacit understanding that every complaint, whatever summit of summits you send it to, will be referred back to the very authority of which you are complaining. Let no officer of the court (prosecutor or investigator) be censured for abusing his office, for giving free rein to bad temper or a desire for personal vengeance, for making a mistake or for misconducting a case. We will cover up for him! Protect him! Form a wall around him! We are the Law —and that is what Law is for.

What is the good of beginning an investigation and then not bringing charges? Does this not mean that the interrogator's work is wasted? What is the good of a hearing without a conviction? Wouldn't the people's court be letting the investigating officer down and wasting his time? What does it mean when an oblast court overturns the decision of a people's court? It means that the higher court has added another botched job to the oblast's record. Think of the discomfort you would be causing your comrades in the profession—what's the point of it? *Once begun,* as the result

of a denunciation, let's say, an *investigation* must end without fail in a conviction, *which cannot possibly be quashed.* Above all—don't let one another down! And don't let the raikom down—do what they tell you. In return they will see that you come to no harm.

Another very important thing about the courts today: there is no tape recorder, no stenographer, just a thick-fingered secretary with the leisurely penmanship of an eighteenth-century schoolgirl, laboriously recording some part of the proceedings in the transcript. This record is not read out during the session, and no one is allowed to see it until the judge has looked it over and approved it. Only what the judge confirms will remain on record, will have happened in court. While things that we have heard with our own ears vanish like smoke—they never happened at all!

In his mind's eye the judge can always see the shiny black visage of truth—the telephone in his chambers. This oracle will never fail you, as long as you do what it says.

Endure and flourish, O noble company of judges! We exist for you! Not you for us! May justice be a thick-piled carpet beneath your feet. If it goes well with you, then all is well!

The proven reliability of the judicial system makes the lives of the police much easier. It enables them to apply without misgivings the method known as the "trailer" or the "crime sack." Because of the slackness, the inefficiency, the boneheadedness of the local police, crime after crime after crime remains unsolved. But to keep the books straight, criminals must be "exposed" (and cases "closed"). So they wait for a suitable opportunity. A man lands in the police station—somebody pliant, easily bullied, not too bright—and they saddle him with all these unsolved crimes. He's the one! All this year! The elusive master criminal! Pummel and starve him till he *confesses* everything, puts his name to it all, earns himself a sentence commensurate with the grand total of his crimes—and so wipe a blot from the district.

The health of society is much improved, since no sin goes unpunished. And the police in charge of criminal investigations are given prizes.

The health of society has improved still further, and justice has been further reinforced in recent years, since the cry went up that *parasites* should be seized, tried, and deported. This decree was also a partial replacement for the elastic 58-10, now only a memory: accusations made under it proved just as insidious, just as

flimsy—and just as irrefutable. (They managed to use it against I. Brodsky, the poet!)

The meaning of the word was skillfully distorted from the start. Real parasites, highly paid drones, sat on the bench or at their bureaucratic desks while sentences rained down on paupers with skills and an appetite for work who knocked themselves out trying to earn a bit extra when the working day was over. How viciously —with the undying hatred of the overfed for the hungry—they fell upon these "idlers." Two of Adzhubei's unscrupulous journalists[10] had the effrontery to declare that parasites were not being banished far enough from Moscow. They were allowed to receive parcels and money orders from relatives! Discipline was not strict enough! "They are not made to work from dawn to dusk." These are their very words: "from dawn to dusk." What Communist dawn, what constitutional order, we may wonder, can call for such drudgery?

We have listed several important *streams* which (together with the endless spate of embezzlers) ensure that the Archipelago is continually replenished.

Nor is it altogether wasted effort for the "people's brigades" *(druzhinniki)*—those freebooters or storm troopers commissioned by the militia, unmentioned in the Constitution, and free from responsibility before the law—to walk the streets, or stay comfortably in their command posts knocking out the teeth of prisoners.

Reinforcements flow in to the Archipelago. And although we have had a classless society for so long, although the glow of the Communist conflagration half-fills the sky, we are used to the idea that crime never ceases, never decreases, and indeed that no one now seems to promise any such thing. In the 1930s they assured us: We're almost there, just a few more years. They don't even make such statements any more.

The Law in our country, in its might and its flexibility, is unlike anything called "law" elsewhere on earth.

The stupid Romans had a formula: "The law has no retroactive force." With us—it has! An old reactionary proverb may mutter: "Laws aren't written for what's gone and done." In our country —they are! If a modish new Decree comes out and the Law itches to apply it to persons already in custody—why not, let it do so!

10. *Izvestiya*, June 23, 1964.

This is what happened to the currency speculators and bribe takers. Lists were sent from, say, Kiev to Moscow, where the names of those to whom the Law could be *retrospectively applied* were ticked off (and they were given a *longer stretch* or promoted to *nine grams of lead* accordingly).

Then again, in our country the Law is clairvoyant. You might suppose that before a trial takes place, the course of the hearing, and the verdict, would be unknown. But you may find *Socialist Legality* publishing all this *before* the trial takes place. How can it know? Just ask yourself.[11]

Then again, Soviet Law has *forgotten all about* the sin of bearing false witness—and simply does not regard it as a crime! A legion of false witnesses thrives in our midst, they go sedately on their way to an honorable old age, bask in a golden sunset at the end of their days. Ours is the only country in the world and in history to pamper perjurers!

Then again, Soviet Law does not punish *murdering* judges and *murdering* prosecutors. They all enjoy long and honorable careers, and live to be noble elders.

Then again, no one can deny that Soviet Law is capable of those abrupt changes of course, those sudden swerves characteristic of all anxious creative thought. At times, the Law veers toward "sharp reduction of crime in a single year!" Arrest fewer! Try fewer! Release convicted offenders on probation! At other times, it veers in the opposite direction. Evildoers endlessly multiply! No more probation! Send more to hard labor and special regime camps! Stiffer sentences! Execute the villains!

Whatever storms may buffet it, the vessel of the Law sails smoothly and majestically on. Our Supreme Courts, our Supreme Prosecutors, are old hands, and no gust will take them by surprise. They will conduct their Plenary Sessions, they will issue their Instructions—and every insane change of course will be shown to be a long-felt need, a logical result of our whole historical develop-

11. See *Sotsialisticheskaya Zakonnost* (organ of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the U.S.S.R.), No. 1, January, 1962. Signed for the press on December 27, 1961. On pp. 73–74 there is an article by Grigoryev (Gruzda) (called "Fascist Hangmen"). It contains a report on the trial of some Estonian war criminals at Tartu. The writer describes the questioning of witnesses, the exhibits before the court, the cross-examination of one defendant ("the murderer cynically answered"), the reactions of the public, the prosecutor's speech. It further reports that sentence of death was passed. All these things, indeed, occurred *exactly as described*—but not till January 16, 1962 (see *Pravda* for January 17), by which time the journal was already in print and on sale. (The trial had been postponed, and the journal had not been warned. The journalist concerned got one year's forced labor.)

ment, prophetically envisaged in the One True Doctrine.

The vessel of Soviet Law is ready for the sharpest turn. If orders come tomorrow to put millions inside again for their way of thinking, or to deport whole peoples (the same peoples as before, or others) or rebellious towns, or to pin four numbers on prisoners again—its mighty hull will scarcely tremble, its stem will not buckle.

There remains—what Derzhavin tells us, what only those who have experienced it for themselves can feel in their hearts:

"An unjust court is worse than brigandage."

Yes, that remains true. As true as it was under Stalin, as it was all through the years described in this book. Many Fundamental Principles, Decrees, and Laws, contradictory or complementary, have been promulgated and printed—but it is not in accordance with them that our country lives, and that arrests are made, trials held, expert evidence given. Only in those few cases (15 percent, perhaps?) in which the subject of investigation and judicial proceedings affects neither the interests of the state, nor the reigning ideology, nor the personal interests or comfort of some officeholder—only very rarely can the officers of the court enjoy the privilege of trying a case without telephoning somebody to seek instructions; of trying it on its merits and as conscience dictates. All other cases—the overwhelming majority: criminal or civil, it makes no difference—inevitably affect in some important way the interests of the chairman of a kolkhoz or a village soviet, a shop foreman, a factory manager, the head of a Housing Bureau, a block sergeant, the investigating officer or commander of a police district, the medical superintendent of a hospital, a chief planning officer, the heads of administrations or ministries, special sections or personnel sections, the secretaries of district or oblast Party Committees—and upward, ever upward! In all such cases, calls are made from one discreet inner office to another; leisurely, lowered voices give friendly *advice,* steady and steer the decision to be reached in the trial of a wretched little man caught in the tangled schemes, which he would not understand even if he knew them, of those set in authority over him. The naïvely trusting little newspaper reader goes into the courtroom conscious that he is in the right. His reasonable arguments are carefully rehearsed, and he lays them before the somnolent, masklike faces on the bench, never suspecting that sentence has been passed on him already—that there are no courts of appeal, no proper channels and due

procedures through which a malignant, a corrupt, a soul-searingly unjust verdict can be undone.

There is—only a wall. And its bricks are laid in a mortar of lies.

We called this chapter "The Law Today." It should rightly be called *"There Is No Law."*

The same treacherous secrecy, the same fog of injustice, still hangs in our air, worse than the smoke of city chimneys.

For half a century and more the enormous state has towered over us, girded with hoops of steel. The hoops are still there. There is no law.

Afterword

Instead of my writing this book alone, the chapters should have been shared among people with special knowledge, and we should then have met in editorial conference and helped each other to put the whole in true perspective.

But the time for this was not yet. Those whom I asked to take on particular chapters would not do so, but instead offered stories, written or oral, for me to use as I pleased. I suggested to Varlam Shalamov that we write the whole book together, but he also declined.

What was really needed was a well-staffed office. To advertise in the newspapers and on the radio ("Please reply!"), to carry on open correspondence, to do what was done with the story of the Brest fortress.*

Not only could I not spread myself like this; I had to conceal the project itself, my letters, my materials, to disperse them, to do everything in deepest secrecy. I even had to camouflage the time I spent working on the book with what looked like work on other things.

As soon as I began the book, I thought of abandoning it. I could not make up my mind: should I or should I not be writing such a book by myself? And would I have the stamina for it? But when, in addition to what I had collected, prisoners' letters converged on me from all over the country, I realized that since all this had been given to me, I had a duty.

I must explain that *never once* did this whole book, in all its parts, lie on the same desk at the same time! In September, 1965, when work on the Archipelago was at its most intensive, I suffered

a setback: my archive was raided and my novel* impounded. At this point the parts of the Archipelago already written, and the materials for the other parts, were scattered, and never reassembled: I could not take the risk, especially when all the names were given correctly. I kept jotting down reminders to myself to check this and remove that, and traveled from place to place with these bits of paper. The jerkiness of the book, its imperfections, are the true mark of our persecuted literature. Take the book for what it is.

I have stopped work on the book not because I regard it as finished, but because I cannot spend any more of my life on it.

Besides begging for indulgence, I want to cry aloud: When the time and the opportunity come, gather together, all you friends who have survived and know the story well, write your own commentaries to go with my book, correct and add to it where necessary (but do not make it too unwieldy, do not duplicate what is there already). Only then will the book be definitive. God bless the work!

I am surprised to have finished it safely, even in this form. I have several times thought they would not let me.

I am finishing it in the year of a double anniversary (and the two anniversaries are connected): it is fifty years since the revolution which created Gulag, and a hundred since the invention of barbed wire (1867).

This second anniversary will no doubt pass unnoticed.

Ryazan—Ukryvishche
April 27, 1958–February 22, 1967

P.P.S.

I was in a hurry when I wrote what you have just read, because I expected that even if I did not perish in the explosion set off by my letter to the Writers' Congress I should lose my freedom to write and access to my manuscripts. But as things turned out, I was not only not arrested as a result of the letter, but found myself on a granite footing. I realized then that I must and could complete and correct this book.

A few friends have now read it. They have helped me to see the serious defects in it. I did not try it out on a wider circle, and if this ever becomes possible, it will be too late for me.

In this last year I have done what I could to improve it. Let no one blame me for its incompleteness; there is no end to the additions which could be made, and every single person who has had the slightest contact with the subject or thought seriously about it will always be able to add something—often something precious. But there are laws of proportion. In size my book has reached the utmost limit. Push in a few more little grains and the whole cliff will come tumbling down.

For sometimes expressing myself badly, for repetition in places and loose construction in others, I ask forgiveness. I was not granted a quiet year after all, and during the last few months the ground has been burning under my feet again, and the desk under my hand. Even while preparing this last version I have *never once* seen the whole book together, never once had it all on my desk at one time.

The full list of those without whom this book could not have been written, revised, or kept safe cannot yet be entrusted to paper. They know who they are. They have my homage.

Rozhdestvo-na-Iste
May, 1968

Notes

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7 **katorga:** This word also serves as the general title of Part V. The standard English translation is "hard labor" or "penal servitude," and the Russian term derives from the Greek word for the forced labor of a slave chained to the oar of a galley. It is important to note here that the word *katorga* (the first syllable is stressed) had come to stand for a specifically Tsarist type of punishment; it summoned to mind images of idealistic revolutionaries toiling in Siberian mines.

A person sentenced to *katorga* is a *katorzhanin* (masc.); the plural form is *katorzhane.*

7 **DOPR:** Acronym for *Dom Prinuditelnykh Rabot* (Institution of Compulsory Labor).

7 **ITL:** Acronym for *Ispravitelno-Trudovoi Lager* (Corrective Labor Camp).

7 **"officer," "general," etc.:** These terms and a number of other items in military and administrative terminology were abandoned in 1917 as expressive of the bourgeois class system. The word "officer" was in special disrepute because the majority of the Imperial officer corps had sided with the Whites during the Civil War. In Solzhenitsyn's short story "Incident at Krechetovka Station," set in 1941, the protagonist feels "wounded as if by a bayonet" by the very thought that his interlocutor might be an "officer" in disguise.

"General" was reinstated in 1940, "officer" was brought back as a standard military term in 1943. "Director" and "supreme" had reappeared in common usage in the 1930's.

9 **zeks:** That is, "convicts" or "prisoners." For one theory about the origin of the term "zek," see Volume Two, page 506.

10 **twenty-eight letters:** The Russian (Cyrillic) alphabet has thirty-three letters, but five of these—*yo, i kratkoye,* the "hard sign", *yery,* and the "soft sign"—are not generally used in any serial notation that involves letters.

10 **Polizei, burgomasters:** Terms that describe, respectively, members of the police units recruited by the Germans from among the population of the occupied territories, and minor local officials appointed by the Germans.

11 **Organs:** That is, Organs of State Security, a Soviet designation for the

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political police. The term "Organs"—without any modifiers—was commonly used by the personnel of the internal security agencies.

11 **Kabanikha:** Sanctimonious and tyrannical woman in Aleksandr Ostrovsky's play *The Thunderstorm* (1860).

16 **Oktyabr:** Literary grouping of proletarian writers, organized in 1922, which began publishing a monthly periodical of the same name in 1924. Characterized by doctrinaire excesses in the 1920's, the journal has remained a mouthpiece for hard-line Party views.

21 **OGPU:** Acronym for *Obyedinyonnoye Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravlenie* (Unified State Political Administration), the name of the Soviet internal security agency from 1924 to 1934. Between 1922 and 1924 the agency's name was simply GPU, and this shorter form was often used informally for the later period as well.

22 **Levitan:** Yuri Levitan is the best-known radio announcer in the Soviet Union. He has delivered the official news broadcasts on Radio Moscow for more than a generation.

27 **Vlasov movement:** Russian anti-Communist movement during World War II associated with the name of General Andrey Vlasov (see Glossary), which envisaged an armed overthrow of the Soviet regime with the help of the German military. In practice it mainly involved the recruiting of help (both armed and unarmed) for the German army from among the vast numbers of Soviet POW's. Viewed with considerable suspicion by the Nazi hierarchy, the Vlasov movement was not allowed to concentrate its forces on the Eastern front, nor did General Vlasov receive formal authority over Russian units in the German army until the very last phases of the war. See Solzhenitsyn's earlier comments on the movement in *The Gulag Archipelago,* Volume One, pages 251–262.

27 **Chekist:** Originally and narrowly, members of the Cheka, the first Soviet internal security agency. The name is often applied, by extension, to personnel of the succeeding security agencies.

28 **Politburo and Orgburo of the CPSU(b):** The "b" in parentheses stands for "Bolsheviks" and "Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)" was the official title of the Party until 1952.

The Politburo is the chief policy-making body of the Communist Party. The Orgburo is a subcommittee of the Party's Central Committee and is concerned with organizational and procedural matters.

29 **raikoms and gorkoms:** Acronyms for *rayonny komitet* and *gorodskoy komitet,* local administrative bodies of the Communist Party at the *rayon* and the municipal level respectively. (A *rayon* is a territorial subdivision of an *oblast* or of a large municipality.)

31 **Pugachev rising:** Yemelyan Pugachev (Pugachov) headed a large popular revolt in 1773–1775. He promised a liberation of the serfs and received considerable support in the Volga and Ural areas; it required extraordinary efforts on the part of the government of Catherine II to quell the uprising.

32 **Cadets:** Usual designation of the Russian Constitutional Democrats, moderate liberals whose party was formed in 1905 and outlawed by the Bolsheviks. (The name "Cadets" is derived from the Russian abbreviation of the party's name, K.D., pronounced "kah-deh.")

34 **Gorlag, etc.:**
Gorlag = Gorny lager—Mountain Camp
Berlag = Beregovoi lager—Waterside Camp

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Minlag = Mineralny lager—Mineral Camp
Rechlag = Rechnoi lager—Riverside Camp
Dubrovlag = Dubrovny lager—Leafy Grove Camp
Ozerlag = Ozernoi lager—Lakeshore Camp
Steplag = Stepnoi lager—Steppe Camp
Peschanlag = Peschany lager—Sandy Camp
Luglag = Lugovoi lager—Meadow Camp
Kamyshlag = Kamyshovy lager—Reed Camp

34 **red-tabbed guards:** That is, guards drawn from regular army troops.

37 **"At all costs steer clear of general duties":** On this special-assignment prisoner and his advice, see *The Gulag Archipelago,* Volume One, pages 563–64.

38 **Stolypin car:** A railroad car designed for transporting prisoners.

42 **bitches:** Translation of *suki,* term for professional criminals who choose to collaborate with the authorities. In abusive force similar to English "scab" directed at a strikebreaker.

42 **"godfather":** Translation of *kum,* prison-camp slang for the chief security officer. In its literal sense, *kum* is the term used to designate the godfather of one's child. Since this type of relationship implies friendship, the word *kum* has also come to be used as an ironic expression for a person with "pull" who can influence one's career positively. The prison-camp term seems to be a further development of this meaning.

42 **SR:** Abbreviation for Socialist Revolutionary. This radical populist party enjoyed considerable support in Russia and was outlawed by the regime in 1922.

43 **"muzzles":** Louvers or shutters attached to the windows of prisons.

44 **They had sown the seed themselves:** Reference to the substantial role played by the Latvian Rifle Regiments in the establishment of the Soviet regime.

44 **Tambov peasants:** In 1920–1921, a major peasant uprising against the Soviet regime took place in Tambov Province under the leadership of Aleksandr Antonov, an adherent of the SR party.

46 **Vanguard Doctrine:** That is, Marxist-Leninist ideology, which claims to be the world's most progressive philosophy.

51 **Campaign on the Ice:** Also known as the First Kuban Campaign, this episode in the Russian Civil War refers to the withdrawal of the White Volunteer Army from Rostov-on-the-Don in February, 1918, its march across the frozen steppe to the Kuban river area, and its triumphant return to the Don region after almost three months of constant fighting.

58 **numbers beginning with yery:** In Russian serial notation that involves letters of the Cyrillic alphabet, *yery* (bl) is not generally used.

67 **It:** The "it" in the biblical passage refers to the "beast from the earth" that enforced emperor-worship.

70 **Finnish huts:** Prefabricated units imported from Finland or based on such a design.

75 **gophers:** A pun in Russian. Apart from the reference to the desert animals who would be the only ones to see the prison van anyway, the word "gopher" *(suslik)* is a slang term for "gullible fool."

79 **Assemblies of the Land:** Translation of *Zemsky Sobor,* a term for assemblies convoked in Muscovy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Played prominent role in reestablishing order during the turbulent period in the early seventeenth century.

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79 **"SK":** Abbreviation for *ssylno-katorzhny*—i.e., "one exiled to hard labor."

79 **Decembrist rising:** An unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the Tsarist regime undertaken by liberal-minded aristocratic officers in 1825. Some three thousand rebel troops formed on Senate Square in St. Petersburg on December 14, 1825, but the mutiny collapsed by the end of the day. Five leaders were eventually hanged, several dozen more were sentenced to Siberian exile.

80 **"On the Senate Square":** That is, with the Decembrist mutineers (see note above). The poet Aleksandr Pushkin had many close friends among the Decembrist leadership, but at the time of the uprising he was confined to his parents' country estate in Mikhailovskoye. Summoned to Moscow for a personal audience with Tsar Nicholas I, Pushkin openly admitted his sympathies.

83 **Iskra:** First Russian Marxist newspaper, founded by Lenin in 1900 and published abroad until 1905, *Iskra* carried many of Lenin's important early essays.

87 **"Stolypin reaction":** The revolutionaries' term for the period following the suppression of the 1905 revolution, and associated with the policies of Minister of the Interior P. A. Stolypin (1862–1911).

88 **punitive operation at Novocherkassk:** Reference to the bloody suppression of the disturbances in Novocherkassk in June, 1962. This episode is described below, Part VII, Chapter 3.

88 **Livadia:** Site of the summer residence of the royal family in the vicinity of Yalta.

92 **Dal:** Vladimir Dal (Dahl) was a prominent Russian nineteenth-century lexicographer. His four-volume dictionary of the Russian language contains a great mass of material not included in any other dictionary and is one of Solzhenitsyn's favorite sources.

103 **Vasily Tyorkin:** Long narrative poem by Aleksandr Tvardovsky, published in installments during World War II, which describes the life and adventures of a cheerful and resourceful Russian front-line soldier. The poem has enjoyed enormous popularity.

114 **Kady trial:** See *The Gulag Archipelago,* Volume One, pages 419–431.

116 **Mtsyri:** Hero of Mikhail Lermontov's narrative poem of the same name (1840). Mtsyri is a novice who escapes from a Caucasian monastery in an attempt to return to the land of his birth. He fails, and his wanderings through the surrounding forests symbolize the inescapable tragedy of life.

119 **I was on the roads of East Prussia:** That is, engrossed in the long narrative poem *Prussian Nights,* in which Solzhenitsyn describes the tumultuous advance of the Soviet Army through East Prussia during the last phases of World War II.

121 **goners:** Translation of *dokhodyagi,* prison slang for zeks whose physical state indicates that their days are numbered.

123 **Ninth of January:** On Sunday, January 9, 1905, a large procession of workers attempted to present a petition to the Tsar. They were met with gunfire, which left over one hundred dead and several hundred wounded. This episode became known as "Bloody Sunday" and the date is commemorated yearly in the Soviet Union. (But see below, page 255*n*.)

127 **NEP:** Abbreviation for "New Economic Policy," a temporary relaxation of controls in agriculture, trade, and industry between 1921 and 1928. Private enterprise of all sorts flourished during this period.

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148 **"half-caste":** Translation of *priblatnyonny,* prison slang for a zek who acts like a professional criminal.

149 **shock workers:** Soviet designation of workers whose productivity is considerably above the norm.

150 **makhorka:** Coarse, low-grade tobacco.

159 **"green prosecutor":** Prison-camp expression for escape.

163 **beshbarmak:** A Kazakh meat dish.

163 **aksakal:** Kazakh term of respect, literally "white beard."

163 **yok:** Kazakh for "there is none."

171 **sovkhoz:** Soviet farm administered directly by the state and operated like an industrial enterprise. A sovkhoz lacks the cooperative structure characteristic of a collective farm (kolkhoz).

193 **"class ally" type of prisoners:** That is, common or professional criminals. The term "class allies" (*sotsialno-blizkie,* which might also be rendered as "social allies" or "those of a kindred class") is derived from Marxist-Leninist class theory, according to which felons are seen as potential allies in the building of Communism due to their proletarian background. See further in *The Gulag Archipelago,* Volume Two, especially pages 434 f. The antonym of "class ally" is "socially alien element," once again defined as such on the strength of social background.

219 **of Stalin fur:** That is, without fur of any kind. This ironic expression probably arose by analogy to the Russian phrase *na rybyem mekhu* ("lined with fish fur"), used to describe a flimsy garment.

226 **bluecaps:** That is, members of the Soviet security agencies. The reference is to the light-blue cap band that distinguished the uniform of the NKVD.

251 **"kulak sabotage":** The word *kulak,* (literally "fist"), which in its figurative sense used to mean "village usurer," came to be applied in Soviet times to almost any peasant who was successful or well-to-do. (See below, Part VI, chapter 2.) Resistance to the policy of forced collectivization of agriculture initiated in 1929 was termed "kulak sabotage."

251 **kutya:** A dish prepared from boiled wheat (or rice) sweetened with honey, and usually with an admixture of poppy seeds, raisins, or nuts. It is traditionally eaten on Christmas Eve and at certain other special occasions.

271 **isolator:** Special prison or camp for important political prisoners who are kept incommunicado.

279 **March 5:** The death of Iosif Stalin was officially announced on March 5, 1953.

289 **Yevtushenko's poem:** Bratsk, a town on the Angara River in southeastern Siberia, is the site of a huge hydroelectric station, completed in the 1960's. Yevgeny Yevtushenko has written a lengthy narrative poem celebrating this project (*Bratskaya GES,* 1965).

327 **that summer thirteen years before:** That is, the summer of 1941, the time of the surprise attack launched by Germany on Soviet Russia.

337 **"Witte" committee:** This appears to refer to a provincial branch of an organization that promoted Russian industrial development. Count Sergei Witte (1845–1915) served as Russia's Minister of Finance between 1892 and 1903 and did a great deal to stimulate the growth of industry.

339 **subbotnik:** According to the official definition, this is a voluntary contri-

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bution of one's time to perform "socially useful" labor. No compensation is given for such work, which was originally scheduled on Saturdays.

340 **War Communism:** The name applied to the policies and practices of the Soviet regime between 1918 and 1921, particularly in the sphere of economics. This included a large-scale requisitioning of produce from the peasants and the nationalization of industry and trade.

342 **Stakhanovite:** The Stakhanovite movement was launched by the regime in an attempt to increase the productivity of workers. The movement takes its name from Aleksei Stakhanov, a coal miner who was widely touted to have exceeded the production norm by a factor of 14 on one fine day in 1935. Workers who emulated such feats, and those who tried earnestly to do so, were called "Stakhanovites." The term has been supplanted by "shock workers."

343 **SD's:** That is, members of the Social Democratic party, the Russian Marxists who had not accepted Bolshevism.

360 **Magnitogorsk building operation:** One of the major industrial projects during the first Five-Year Plan was the construction of the Magnitogorsk Metal Works, a huge steel-producing plant in the Urals, built together with the town of Magnitogorsk in 1929–1931. Many writers visited the site and hymned the project in prose and verse. Among the better-known works in this style is Valentin Katayev's novel *Time, Forward* (1932).

365 **Tyurin:** A hardbitten and camp-wise brigade leader in Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.*

382 **"Adenauer amnesty":** Amnesty granted in 1955 by Khrushchev to persons accused of having collaborated with the Germans during World War II. It was a direct result of the repatriation of many thousands of German POW's that had been negotiated by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in Moscow.

387 **twenty-six Finns:** For the sake of argument, the author is here suggesting a comparison with the twenty-six Bolshevik commissars executed in Baku by British troops in 1918. A formidable cult has been created in the Soviet Union to commemorate those twenty-six names and a large number of literary works treat this subject (the best known is "The Ballad of the Twenty-Six" by Sergei Esenin [1924]).

407 **three square arshins of land:** That is, enough land to dig a grave. An arshin is a Russian traditional unit of length equal to 28 inches; a grave plot would be three arshins long and one arshin wide.

411 **Eric Arvid Andersen:** For some biographical details about this mysterious prisoner, see *The Gulag Archipelago,* Volume one, pages 521–522, 551–554.

437 **Seven Boyars:** Solzhenitsyn's designation of the seven heirs of Stalin in the early period of "collective leadership" following Stalin's death. They are, in alphabetical order: Nikolai Bulganin, Lazar Kaganovich, Nikita Khrushchev, Georgi Malenkov, Anastas Mikoyan, Vyacheslav Molotov, and Kliment Voroshilov. The term "Seven Boyars" *(Semiboyarshchina)* is taken from Russian history, where it was used to refer to a boyar oligarchy.

444 **Cheka-GB:** A composite term that covers all the Soviet internal security agencies, from the earliest (the Cheka) to the present-day KGB.

446 **passport, which the poet . . . bade all men envy:** Reference to Vladimir Mayakovsky's poem entitled "Verses About a Soviet Passport" (1929),

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in which the poet describes with relish the effect produced by his Soviet documents on a foreign official. The poem ends:

Read this

and turn green with envy—

I am a citizen
of the Soviet Union.

"And your brothers shall return your sword to you": Quotation from Aleksandr Pushkin's "Message to Siberia" (1827), addressed to the Decembrists exiled to hard labor in Siberia. Pushkin ends his poetic epistle on the following hopeful note:

The heavy-hanging chains will fall,
The walls will crumble at the word;
And Freedom greet you in the light
And brothers give you back the sword.
(Trans. Max Eastman)

467 **Narodovoltsy:** Members of the clandestine terrorist organization called Narodnaya Volya (The People's Will), formed in 1879. Their major goal was the assassination of high-ranking government officials, with the Tsar as the principal target. After several attempts, the Narodovoltsy succeeded in murdering Alexander II in 1881. Five members of the organization were hanged as a result.

472 **Volkovoy:** Lieutenant Volkovoy is the sadistic disciplinary officer in the prison camp depicted in Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.*

473 **MOOP:** Acronym for *Ministerstvo Okhrany Obshchestvennogo Poriadka* (Ministry for the Protection of Public Order). The MVD was given this name in 1962, but the original title (MVD) was restored in 1968. A major function of the MOOP, like that of the MVD before and after it, was to administer the system of camps and prisons. It was also charged with a broad range of other security tasks, from riot control to border duty. The author of the letter quoted by Solzhenitsyn is, strictly speaking, guilty of an anachronism when he refers to the guards depicted in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* as serving in the MOOP: the action of the novel is set in 1951, when the MVD was in charge. But as another outraged letter quoted below points out, the administrative personnel throughout these years remained largely the same.

475 **"accursed incognito":** A famous quote from Nikolai Gogol's play *The Inspector General* (1836).

482 **Likhosherstov (!):** The exclamation mark draws attention to the bizarre surname, which means something like "vicious fur" or "bad pelt."

491 **OUN:** *Organizatsiya Ukrainskikh Natsionalistov* (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists), a militant organization that sporadically collaborated with the Germans during World War II. After the conclusion of the war, various Ukrainian nationalist groups (commonly known as Banderists) waged guerrilla warfare against Soviet forces for a number of years. It has always been Soviet practice to refer to armed resistance of this sort as "banditry" so as to deny that it possesses broad public support.

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496 **my nomination for a Lenin Prize:** Solzhenitsyn's novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was nominated for the Lenin Prize in literature in December, 1963. (The prize was eventually awarded to a less "controversial" writer.)

496 **"Ochakov taken and Tartary subdued":** Quote from Griboyedov's comedy *Woe from Wit* (1824). The action of the play is set in the 1820's and this line characterizes a mentality hopelessly out of date: Ochakov was captured by the Russians in 1788, and the Tartar Khanate of Crimea annexed in 1783.

503 **Potemkin structures:** That is, showcase institutions entirely uncharacteristic of the usual conditions in prison camps. During Catherine the Great's 1787 tour of the newly annexed Crimean territories, her statesman and favorite Grigory Potemkin undertook elaborate measures to make this area appear to be wealthier and more populous than it was in reality. Among other things, he ordered several fake villages to be constructed along Catherine's route. The phrase "Potemkin village" has since then become a common designation of a fraud designed to deceive outsiders.

503 **"A Bitch Went Walking":** A complex pun in Russian. In his book *My Testimony,* Anatoly Marchenko relates that the acronym SVP, which stands for *Sektsiya Vnutrennego Poriadka* (Internal Order Section—a unit that operates in contemporary Soviet prison camps), has been deciphered by zek wits as *Suka Vyshla Pogulyat* (A Bitch Came Out for a Walk). The word "bitch" here stands for an active collaborator with the authorities, and the whole expression therefore suggests that the Internal Order Sections depend primarily on turncoats and informers.

510 **Pliev:** "Plif" ("Palif") is the word of command meaning "Fire!"

512 **KUKKS:** Acronym for *Kursy Usovershenstvovaniya Kavaleriiskogo Komandnogo Sostava* (Courses for the Upgrading of the Command Structure in the Cavalry).

526 **what was done with the story of the Brest fortress:** The city of Brest near the Polish border came under attack on the very first day of the German onslaught on Soviet Russia in 1941. The Germans met unexpectedly stiff resistance here, and the citadel of Brest held out for over a week against vastly superior forces. In the post-Stalin epoch, when the defenders of Brest were no longer classified as traitors to the Motherland (all who capitulated had automatically been branded as such during the war), the writer Sergei Smirnov received permission to collect documents and memoirs relating to this episode. To this end Smirnov published appeals in the newspapers and even made special radio broadcasts. The material gathered in this manner was incorporated in two books on the defense of Brest published by Smirnov in the late 1950's.

527 **my novel:** Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle,* which had at that point not been published anywhere.

The Notes to this edition have been prepared by Alexis Klimoff.

Glossary

This Glossary is selective and the reader is referred to the corresponding sections of Volumes I and II for additional entries.

Aksakov, Ivan Sergeyevich (1823–1886). Slavophile essayist and thinker. Banned from Moscow in 1878 after giving a lecture on Slavic affairs.

Aleksei Mikhailovich (1629–1676). Tsar of Moscow from 1645.

Alexander I (1777–1825). Became Tsar in 1801.

Alexander II (1818–1881). Became Tsar in 1855. Assassinated by revolutionary terrorists.

Alexander III (1845–1894). Became Tsar in 1881. Under his rule, the campaign against revolutionary movements was intensified.

Arakcheyev, Aleksei Andreyevich (1769–1834). General and Minister of War under Alexander I. Inventor of the "military colonies," which were worked by soldier-farmers under strict discipline. His name became synonymous with reaction.

Arany, Janos (1817–1882). Hungarian poet, active supporter of the 1848–49 revolution.

Bandera, Stepan (1909–1959). Leader of a militant Ukrainian nationalist movement. Attempted to collaborate with Germans during World War II, but was arrested and interned as too unreliable and independent. His followers are referred to as Banderists.

Berdyayev, Nikolai Aleksandrovich (1874–1948). Philosopher, essayist, brilliant defender of human freedom against the encroachments of ideology. Lived in emigration after 1922.

Beria, Lavrenti Pavlovich (1899–1953). Sinister head of Stalin's internal security apparatus between 1938 and 1953.

Breshko-Breshkovsky, Nikolai Nikolayevich (1874–1943). Émigré author of several dozen low-grade works of a type known in Russian as "boulevard novels" (accurately rendered by the British expression "penny dreadfuls").

Bulgakov, Mikhail Afanasyevich (1891–1940). Writer of prose and drama.

Burtsev, Vladimir Lvovich (1862–1942). Populist revolutionary. Emigrated at the beginning of the twentieth century. Publisher of the magazine *Byloye,* which concerned itself with the history of the revolutionary movement. Returned to Russia in 1917, but emigrated again during the Civil War.

Catherine II (1729–1796). Became Empress in 1762.

Chang Tso-lin (1873–1928). Powerful Chinese military leader and war lord. Governor of Manchuria in 1911. Occupied Peking several times.

Chekhov, Anton Pavlovich (1860–1904). Major prose writer and greatest Russian playwright. In 1890, he undertook a journey to Sakhalin Island in order to see the penal settlements there; he published a book of his observations in 1895.

Cot, Pierre (1895–). French progressive political figure. Member of the World Council for Peace.

Denikin, Anton Ivanovich (1872–1947). Russian general who served 1918–1919 as commander of anti-Bolshevik forces in southern Russia during the Civil War.

Dmitri Tsarevich (1582–1591). Prince of Uglich. Son of Ivan the Terrible. Historians are divided as to whether his death was accidental or the result of a plot.

Dolgoruky, Yuri (1090–1157). Russian prince, considered the founder of Moscow in 1147.

Doroshevich, Vlas Mikhailovich (1864–1922). Russian journalist of radical sympathies, noted for his description of the penal settlements on Sakhalin Island, which he toured in the late 1890's.

Dutov, Aleksandr Ilyich (1864–1921). White Russian military leader during the Civil War. Led a Cossack revolt in the Orenburg region in November–December, 1917.

Dyakov, Boris Aleksandrovich (1902–). Soviet writer, arrested in 1949. Published two books of prison-camp memoirs in the 1960's, in which he proclaimed his unwavering faith in the Party.

Dzerzhinsky, Feliks Edmundovich (1877–1926). Organizer and head of the first Soviet internal security agency, the Cheka. Until his death served also as the head of the succeeding security agencies, the GPU and the OGPU.

Ehrenburg, Ilya Grigoryevich (1891–1967). Poet, prose writer, and journalist notorious for his ability to adjust smoothly to every fluctuation of the Party line. Played prominent role in the Soviet peace campaign after World War II.

Elizabeth I (Elizaveta Petrovna) (1709–1762). Daughter of Peter the Great. Became Empress in 1741.

Elsberg, Yakov Yefimovich (1901–). Critic and literary historian. After

the Twentieth Party Congress, he was accused of having denounced and caused the arrest of many writers. Threatened with exclusion from the Writers' Union, he saved himself with a letter in which he explained that he was "mistaken, along with the Party."

Frunze, Mikhail Vasilyevich (1885–1925). Military and political figure. Trotsky's successor as Commissar for Military Affairs.

Galanskov, Yuri Timofeyevich (1939–1972). Dissident poet. Editor of samizdat journal. Arrested for "anti-Soviet activity," he died in prison.

Ginzburg, Aleksandr Ilyich (1937–). Dissident, compiler of "White Book" on Sinyavsky-Daniel trial. Codefendent with Galanskov in 1968 trial. Rearrested in 1977 for aid to families of political prisoners.

Gorbatov, Aleksandr Vasilyevich (1891–). A general, arrested in 1929 and deported to the Kolyma; freed in 1941. Author of memoirs of the camps in line with official policy.

Griboyedov, Aleksandr Sergeyevich (1795–1829). Writer and diplomat. His great play in verse, *Woe from Wit* (1824), depicts the collision of an idealistic aristocrat nurtured on liberal ideas with the representatives of a hidebound Moscow society.

Gumilyov, Nikolai Stepanovich (1886–1921). Major poet of the Acmeist school, executed by the Bolsheviks for alleged counterrevolutionary activities.

Herzen, Aleksandr Ivanovich (1812–1870). Liberal socialist writer and journalist. Lived abroad after 1847 and published the influential émigré Russian journal *Kolokol (The Bell).* Herzen supported the Poles in their 1863 uprising against Russian domination.

Ilyichev, Leonid Fyodorovich (1906–). Communist leader; member of the Central Committee, 1961–1966. Appointed to deal with ideological problems during the time of Nikita Khrushchev.

Isakovsky, Mikhail Vasilyevich (1900–). Soviet pastoral poet.

Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible) (1530–1584). Became first Tsar of Russia in 1547.

Jochelson (Iokelson), Vladimir Ilyich (1855–1943). Militant in the People's Will terrorist movement; deported to the Kolyma in 1888. An ethnographer and linguist, he lived in the United States after 1922.

Kaledin, Aleksei Maksimovich (1861–1918). General in the Tsarist army. Led a White Russian insurrection in the Don area, October 1917–February 1918. Committed suicide.

Kalyaev, Ivan Platonovich (1877–1905). Member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, involved in an attempted assassination of Plehve in 1904. On February 4, 1905, he killed the governor general of Moscow with a bomb.

Kamo (Ter-Petrossyan, Semyon Arkakovich) (1882–1922). Georgian

Bolshevik and friend of Stalin; the two men successfully arranged several major robberies ("expropriations").

Karavansky, Svyatoslav (1920–). Ukrainian dissident. Has spent more than 25 years in camps and prison.

Karpenko-Kary (Tobilyevich, Ivan Karpovich) (1845–1907). Ukrainian dramatist and actor.

Karpov, Yevtikhi Pavlovich (1857–1926). Dramatist and theatrical producer. Participated in the Populist movement.

Karsavina, Tamara Platonovna (1885–). Prima ballerina of Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes from 1909 to 1929. After the Revolution she settled in London and taught ballet.

Kassatkin, Ivan Mikhailovich (1880–1938). Writer and landscape painter; member of the Social Democratic Party. Took care of children orphaned by the Revolution. Worked in the State Publishing House during the thirties. Victim of Stalin's purge.

Kautsky, Karl (1854–1938). German Social Democrat. Leader of the Second International. Editor in chief of the *Neue Zeit,* 1883–1917.

Khalturin, Stepan Nikolayevich (1856–1882). Russian revolutionary; set off bomb in the Winter Palace in February, 1880.

Kirillov, Vladimir Timofeyevich (1890–1943). A sailor, he participated in the 1905 revolution, and was sent into exile. Became an important proletarian poet. Victim of Stalin's purge.

Kochetov, Vsevolod Anisimovich (1912–1973). Typifies the Socialist Realism school of writing. Author of many novels.

Kon, Feliks Yakovlevich (1864–1941). Polish revolutionary; later a Bolshevik. Settled in the U.S.S.R. after the October Revolution. Member of the Third International.

Kopelev, Lev Zinovyevich (1912–). German scholar. Solzhenitsyn's prison companion. Author of memoirs.

Korneychuk, Aleksandr Yevdokimovich (1905–1972). Russian-Ukrainian dramatist and high public official. Director of the Writers' Union, and Peace Movement; member of the Central Committee; president of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian S.S.R.; holder of five Stalin Prizes.

Kotoshikhin, Grigory Karpovich (c.1630–1667). Muscovite official who fled in 1666 to Sweden, where he wrote *Russia Under the Reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich,* a valuable historical, literary, and linguistic document.

Kozlov, Frol Romanovich (1908–1965). Communist leader. Member of the Presidium, 1957–1964. After the purge of Leningrad, was secretary of the City Committee (1949–1952), then of Leningrad oblast (1952–1957).

Krasin, Leonid Borisovich (1870–1926). Engineer and one of the very early Bolsheviks. First U.S.S.R. ambassador to France, 1925.

Krasnov, Pyotr Nikolayevich (1869–1947). Important White Russian military leader during the Civil War. In 1944–1945, led a Cossack unit which fought against the Bolsheviks. Delivered to Stalin by the British, and executed.

Kravchenko, Viktor Andreyevich (1905–1966). High Soviet official who defected to the West in1944. Published *I Chose Freedom* (1946), an exposé of Stalinist crimes; sued the directors of the French Communist press when they accused him of publishing fraudulent data.

Krupskaya, Nadezhda Konstantinovna (1869–1939). Lenin's wife and collaborator.

Krzhizhanovsky, Gleb Maksimilianovich (1872–1959). One of Lenin's leading comrades in arms in the revolutionary movement before 1917; later an important official in the Soviet campaign for electrification and the development of energy resources. Spent 1897–1900 in Siberian exile.

Kurochkin, Vasily Stepanovich (1831–1875). Satiric poet and journalist.

Lavrov, Pyotr Lavrovich (1823–1900). Revolutionary; his *Historical Letters* (1868–1869) were the philosophical basis of the Populist movement.

Lermontov, Mikhail Yuryevich (1814–1841). Major Russian poet and novelist. Killed in duel during Caucasian exile.

Lesyuchevsky, Nikolai Vasilyevich (1908–). Director of the Sovetski Pisatel publishing house. Accused of having denounced several writers at the end of the 1930's, causing their arrest.

MacDonald, James Ramsay (1866–1937). English labor leader. Prime Minister, 1924, 1929–1935. Involved in several incidents with the U.S.S.R.

Malenkov, Georgi Maksimilianovich (1902–). Stalin's secretary, then his successor as head of state in 1953. Resigned in 1955; removed from political life in 1957.

Mandelstam, Nadezhda Yakovlevna (1899–). Widow of the poet Osip Mandelstam, who died in transit camp c. 1938. Author of memoirs which are essential reading for an understanding of Russian twentieth-century intellectual history.

Marchenko, Anatoly Tikhonovich (1938–). Spent 1960–67 in prison; described this experience in *My Testimony.* Rearrested several times since then.

Maslennikov, Ivan Ivanovich (1900–1954). General; commander of combined armies during World War II. Connected with GPU-NKVD-MVD before and after war.

Mayakovsky, Vladimir Vladimirovich (1893–1930). Called the "poet of the Russian Revolution." Committed suicide.

Meyerhold, Vsevolod Emilyevich (1874–c.1942). Actor and avant-garde director. Disappeared in Stalin's purges.

Mikhailovsky, Nikolai Konstantinovich (1842–1904). Positivist philosopher, literary critic, and publicist. Leading theorist of the Populist movement.

Mikoyan, Anastas Ivanovich (1895–). Bolshevik; member of the Politburo, 1935–1966. Close collaborator of Stalin's; foreign policy counselor to Khrushchev. Specialized in "difficult situations": sent to Budapest during 1956 insurrection, to Cuba after Soviet missile withdrawal.

Mokrousov, Boris Andreyevich (1909–). Composer, songwriter, winner of a Stalin Prize.

Nadezhdin, Nikolai Ivanovich (1804–1856). Essayist and literary critic; professor at University of Moscow. Exiled 1836–1838.

Nicholas I (1796–1855). Became Tsar in 1825. Quelled Decembrist uprising; known for his hostility to liberalism.

Nicholas II (1868–1918). Tsar from 1894 to 1917. Shot by the Bolsheviks, together with his family.

Nogin, Viktor Pavlovich (1878–1924). Bolshevik; arrested several times. After October, 1917, became People's Commissar of Commerce and Industry.

Ostrovsky, Aleksandr Nikolayevich (1823–1886). Major Russian playwright.

Panin, Dmitri (1911–). Engineer; prison companion of Solzhenitsyn. Has written memoirs. Now lives in France.

Parvus (Helphand), Aleksandr Izrailovich (1867–1924). Active member of the St. Petersburg soviet during 1905 revolution. Sentenced to three years of exile, he escaped abroad. He amassed a large fortune, and sometimes contributed to Bolshevik causes.

Petlyura, Simon Vasilyevich (1879–1926). Ukrainian nationalist leader, 1917–1920. Followers referred to as Petlyurovites.

Petőfi, Sándor (1849–1923). Hungarian poet. Killed during battle of Segesvár.

Pisarev, Dmitri Ivanovich (1840–1868). Radical literary critic. Fierce opponent of "art for art's sake." Imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress for four years.

Platov, Matvey Ivanovich (1751–1818). Hetman of the Don Cossacks. Hero of the 1812 war; buried in Novocherkassk.

Plehve, Vyacheslav Konstantinovich (1846–1904). Minister of the Interior from 1902. Assassinated.

Podbelsky, Vadim Nikolayevich (1887–1920). Bolshevik. Commissar of the Postal Service in 1920.

Pushkin, Aleksandr Sergeyevich (1799–1837). Greatest Russian poet. Spent 1820–26 in exile (Odessa, Moldavia, Mikhailovskoye).

Radishchev, Aleksandr Nikolayevich (1749–1802). Russian nobleman and writer; spent several years in Siberian exile for the attack on the

Russian serf-owning system contained in his book *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* (1790).

Rudenko, Roman Andreyevich (1907–). Public prosecutor for the U.S.S.R. at Nuremberg, 1945–1946. Attorney General of the U.S.S.R. from 1953.

Sazonov, Igor S. (1879–1910). Socialist Revolutionary. One of Plehve's assassins.

Semashko, Nikolai Aleksandrovich (1874–1949). Social Democrat, later Bolshevik. Emigrated in 1905, returned to Russia after February, 1917. People's Commissar for Health, 1918–1930; professor of medicine.

Semyonov-Tyan-Shansky, Pyotr Petrovich (1827–1914). Famous explorer and geographer. His nineteen-volume geography of Russia is a classic.

Shalamov, Varlam Tikhonovich (1907–). Writer; spent 17 years in Kolyma camps; author of *Kolyma Stories* (Paris, 1969) and *Essays on the Criminal World.*

Sheinin, Lev Romanovich (1905–1967). Soviet writer and prosecutor; served as interrogator during the purge years. Apart from publishing detective and spy stories with titles like *The Military Secret,* Sheinin has described some aspects of his career in *Notes of an Investigator* (1938).

Shevchenko, Taras Grigoryevich (1814–1861). Greatest Ukrainian poet. Spent ten years in exile for nationalistic activities.

Shostakovich, Dmitri Dmitriyevich (1906–1975). Composer. Criticized at various times for his "formalism."

Skoropadsky, Pavel Petrovich (1873–1945). General in the Tsarist army. Hetman of the Ukraine, April–December, 1918. Supported by the Germans; emigrated.

Solovyov, Aleksandr Konstantinovich (1846–1879). Revolutionary. Made unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Alexander II in 1879. Hanged.

Spiridonova, Mariya Aleksandrovna (1884–1941). Born in Tambov. Sentenced to prison in 1906 for shooting a policeman who was quelling a peasant uprising. In 1917 she became a leader of the left wing of the Socialist Revolutionaries. Died in a Soviet camp.

Staroselsky, Vladimir Aleksandrovich (1860–1916). Agronomist. Governor of the province of Kutaisi (Georgia), 1905–1906. Helped the revolutionaries; later became a Bolshevik.

Strakhovich, Konstantin Ivanovich. Russian scientist, specialist in aerodynamics. Served as one of Solzhenitsyn's informants in compilation of *The Gulag Archipelago.*

Surkov, Aleksei Aleksandrovich (1899–). Soviet poet, winner of several

Stalin Prizes; member of the World Council for Peace; a director of the Writers' Union.

Suvorin, Aleksei Sergeyevich (1834–1912). Enterprising journalist and publicist, man of letters, theatre director.

Suvorov, Aleksandr Vasilyevich (1730–1800). Outstanding Russian military commander; led Russian armies to a series of victories over Turkish and French forces in the late eighteenth century.

Tan-Bogoraz, Vladimir Germanovich (1865–1936). Deported to the Kolyma at the end of the nineteenth century for his part in the People's Will terrorist movement. Ethnographer, linguist, folklorist, specialist in northern Siberian affairs.

Tevekelyan, Varktes Arutiunovich (1902–1967). Party member; director of a textile mill; writer. His novel *Granite Does Not Melt* (1962) glorifies the Chekists.

Tikhonov, Nikolai Semyonovich (1896–). Soviet poet and prose writer. As chairman of the Soviet Peace Committee after World War II, he made numerous trips abroad.

Tolstoi, Aleksei Nikolayevich (1882–1945). Novelist; well known before the Revolution. Emigrated after the Revolution, but returned to the Soviet Union in 1923. Winner of several Stalin Prizes.

Turgenev, Ivan Sergeyevich (1818–1883). Major Russian novelist. Banished to his estate in 1852 for having written an obituary of Gogol that was forbidden by the censors.

Tvardovsky, Aleksandr Trifonovich (1910–1971). Poet and journalist. Between 1958 and 1970 was Editor in chief of *Novy Mir,* the most prestigious—and at the time the most liberal—Soviet literary monthly. Tvardovsky's support was instrumental in allowing Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* to be published in the Soviet Union, and this novel first appeared on the pages of *Novy Mir.*

Vlasov, Andrei Andreyevich (1900–1946). General of the Soviet Army, captured by the Germans in 1942; agreed to lend his name to the Russian anti-Communist movement during the war. Surrendered to American forces in 1945, and was handed over to Soviet authorities and executed.

Yermak Timofeyevich (?–1585). Cossack hetman. Conqueror of eastern Siberia, 1581–1582.

Yevtushenko, Yevgeny Aleksandrovich (1933–). Poet of the "thaw"; alternately conformist and outspoken.

Zhukovsky, Vasily Andreyevich (1783–1852). Poet, tutor of future Alexander II. He helped Aleksandr Pushkin on many occasions due to his connections with the court.

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